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NOVEMBER, 1887.

DR. HATCH ON CHURCH INSTITUTIONS.*

It was inevitable that, sooner or later, the ecclesiastical system which holds so proud and, as its defenders deem, so impregnable a position in this country, should be subjected to the examination of that scientific criticism which is at work everywhere. The marvel is, indeed, that it has been spared so long, but when we remember the strong prejudices and powerful interests enlisted on its behalf, and how these operate on the minds of those most competent to undertake the necessary research, it is not wonderful that it has been so long delayed. Men naturally hesitate before they do anything likely to injure institutions which have yielded and continue to yield so many pleasant things for them and theirs. In saying this, we do not impute any unworthy motive. On the contrary, some of the purest and most sacred feelings of the heart are enlisted on behalf of their Church; and its defenders, in treating all attacks upon it as acts of sacrilege, and resisting them *à outrance*, feel that they are doing God service. We, however, may be excused if we decline to regard ecclesiastics, however pure and lofty their character, as impartial judges in this controversy. The Bishop of Winchester, for example, is not only a venerable prelate but a sincere Christian, who speaks his own sincere conviction when he tells Canon Wilberforce that the Lord Jesus Christ has given His Church a complete scheme of government. But while we

* *The Growth of Church Institutions.* By Rev. E. HATCH, M.A., D.D. (Hodder and Stoughton.)

believe in his sincerity, we cannot accept him as an impartial authority, and bow to his dictum as conclusive. When we remember the position which he himself holds in this "Catholic" Church, how he has grown up under its teaching, and is saturated with its ideas, how it has given him not only position but authority and dominion, we are hardly astonished that he should regard it as a distinct creation of the Providence of God. And seeing, on the other side, how mighty is the influence of tradition and antiquity, how strong the fascination which "things that are" exercise upon many minds, and therefore what multitudes are prepared to echo the voice of authority, to say nothing of those who have a direct personal interest in upholding that which is established, we cannot be surprised that there is a disposition to accept this Episcopal view without further inquiry.

It is to such causes that the "Catholic" Church owes its comparative immunity from criticism which has been extremely damaging to things of higher importance. The creed which a Church publishes to the world, on which its teaching is based, and in which its members are trained, must surely be of more vital interest than the special form of administration which it adopts; yet there has been a freedom of thought in relation even to the cardinal principles of the creed, which is not tolerated in relation to questions of order and government. It was impossible, however, that this could continue to be the case. Hitherto, it has been the habit of the Church to get rid of inconvenient questionings by treating all who raised them as schismatics. There have long been those who have not bowed down to the idol of authority, who have refused to submit to the rule of bishops and priests as of Divine appointment, who have dared to challenge the whole system of clericalism and ecclesiasticism as a departure from the simplicity that is in Christ. But they have only been ruled out of court as excommunicate from the body of the faithful, and false witnesses as to the Church from which they are aliens. We have, of late, had the acknowledgment, extorted by the stern logic of facts, as well as prompted by a broad

spirit of charity, that they who are not of the Church may yet be of Christ, but their protests against the errors of the hierarchy have been, nevertheless, treated as voices of ignorance or lawlessness to which no heed should be given. It was impossible that such a policy should continue to prevail in this scientific age. Men inquiring into everything else will not for ever be debarred from a thorough examination of Church institutions of every kind. Nothing could well be more striking than the contrast between the Church of the New Testament and the Anglican system as it exists, or that so-called Catholic Church of which it claims to be a reformed branch. The hierarchy is absolutely unknown in the early Church. We have there neither bishop nor priest, diocese nor parish. It is so hard even to detect the germs of ideas out of which these institutions, so eminently unapostolic, have grown, that the simplest incidents—such, for example, as Paul's employment of Timothy and Titus as messengers to the Churches—have been pressed into requisition as furnishing some kind of precedent for diocesan Episcopacy. After all that can be done in this respect, however, the Church of the New Testament remains a voluntary society of Christian men, without prelate or priest, with little of formal organization, as lacking in the mere mechanism of arrangement as it was full of the spirit of love and power.

How is it that all this has been so completely changed? How is it that the humble presbyter of the Church has developed into a hierarch, a mere unit in a carefully-organized body, which not only exercises authority in the Church, but, in fact, assumes to be itself the Church? Here is an elaborate system of parish, and diocese, and province, with a gradation of rank and office, parallel to that which is found in the State, with large revenues derived not from the free-will offerings of the members of the Church, but from the domains of the Church, or rather of the clergy, or the taxes imposed by the State. It is not unreasonable that we should inquire as to the history and natural history of a change which is nothing short of a complete transformation. There is little in common to the New

Testament Church and the modern hierarchy except the name. The private, almost obscure, societies known in Ephesus or Corinth or Rome as Churches, have as little resemblance to the imposing national institution known as the Church of England, as the Apostle preaching on Mars Hill has to the lofty ecclesiastic, adorned in all the gorgeous millinery of cope and vestment, who officiated in the Jubilee ceremony at Westminster Abbey. That the one should, in any way, have grown into the other, is itself a phenomenon of which some explanation needs to be given. But this is what has been studiously evaded. We have been invited to dwell on the glory of this extraordinary development without giving any thought as to whether it has been along the lines of a Divine purpose, and is in harmony with the spirit of the institution itself.

It is not only we, as Nonconformists, who are indebted to Dr. Hatch for taking up this subject. That he vindicates the position we have maintained through evil report and good report—the evil being very preponderant—is a mere incident in the controversy which, of course, is extremely satisfactory to us; but in the facts he has elicited and the principles he has established, he has done a far more important service to the cause of Christian truth itself. It is all the more valuable because of the thoroughly independent position which he holds. He is not a Congregationalist, and does not, so far as we can understand his drift, desire a return to the Congregationalism which he holds to have been the polity of the Primitive Church. His general view is indicated in a significant remark on the development of the parochial system. "It would be a needless, and probably also an untrue optimism, to maintain that whatever happened was the ideal best, but it is none the less clear that the result was not an abnormal outgrowth which needed to be uprooted, but a legitimate outcome of the ordinary forces of our moral nature within the Christian sphere." He is clearly a scientist, rather than an ecclesiastical partizan. He accepts no theory. He is neither with those, on the one hand, who see in the development the traces of a Divine idea and plan; nor with

those on the other who regard it only as a piece of clever ecclesiastical and sacerdotal craft. In his mind, it was a growth due to the force of innumerable circumstances, and shaped by many different hands. Roman emperors and magistrates, barbarian invaders, zealous missionaries, all, in their own way, helped to give it the character which it ultimately assumed. The explanation of the wide differences between primitive institutions and the Church system of the present day, is found by our author in the history. The change was gradual, and "each link in the series carries with it its own justification, if it is found to be a natural and inevitable result of historical circumstances, a modification of an institution or a usage which was forced upon a community by the needs of a particular time." Dr. Hatch's mode of treatment, therefore, is purely scientific. He deals with facts and facts only, without undertaking to pronounce either as to the wisdom of the modifications which have been introduced, or as to the expediency of returning to the original model when the circumstances which led to its adoption have themselves changed. There is nothing revolutionary in his temper. On the contrary, he has profound respect for antiquity, and holds that "we cannot, without risk of enormous loss, and only under the rarest circumstances, cut the moorings which bind us to the past."

The value of the testimony borne by such a witness is incalculable. He writes as an historical expert who, without passion or prejudice (except indeed such prejudice as is inseparable from an attachment to a particular Church), has collated the various documents by means of which the obscure lines of Church history may be traced, and here gives us the results. The present book is designed for the general reader rather than for students, and therefore presents a summary rather than a complete statement, and is sparing of references to authorities. Dr. Hatch, however, tells us that he "is not aware of having made any statement which he is not also ready to support by sufficient proofs." So much confidence may certainly be reposed in him, if for no other reason because he is sure

to be followed in his investigations by numerous critics anxious enough to challenge and overthrow his position. Those who enter upon this discussion, however, will need to be well fortified, for Dr. Hatch is one of those scholars who take nothing for granted themselves, and will not allow any assumptions on the part of others. The readers of his former works do not require to be told that he accepts the view as to the primitive form of early Christian institutions which we, as Congregationalists, have always maintained. We do not mean to say that his Church ideal is ours, but simply that, looking at the subject from the historic standpoint, he admits that our contention is right. We should probably dissent very strongly from his view as soon as the question of the propriety of the changes which have been made came up for consideration, but as to the completeness of the revolution which has transformed the early organization in which each congregation or group of allied congregations had its own "equipment of officers," and its own autonomy, into an elaborate hierarchy, we are perfectly agreed. Holding that the change was due to circumstances, he will not allow that even if the producing causes have ceased we should return to the original model. He tells us "it does not follow that such a modification of a Christian institution should be abolished as soon as the historic circumstances which gave rise to it have passed away." It is here that the differences between us would probably arise. How far they would extend must depend of course upon the real bearing of the changes themselves. Mere adaptations of method which did not violate any principle of Christian truth, or interfere with the right of the individual members of the Christian society, we should probably be inclined to treat with that tolerance which our author would show to institutions which have secured for themselves an established position. It is surely altogether different if the changes involve revolution in the fundamental ideas of Christianity itself. This is the real point in the controversy between Romanism and Protestantism, and between Anglicanism and Congregationalism. Mere questions of polity or of ritual may

seem to be, probably are, very secondary ; but if they are so interwoven with the graver matters of doctrine and spiritual life that it is impossible to separate them, the differences assume an entirely different character. It is not the democratic but the spiritual idea of the Church about which we are specially solicitous. That democratic idea might be embodied in various forms in ecclesiastical as well as in civil life. Democracy is not necessarily government by plebiscite. A democracy may exercise, and, in its best development, has exercised its authority, through representative institutions. So long as each member of the Church has equal rights, the democratic principle may be maintained under a Presbyterian, or even under an Episcopal (not a Prelatical) administration. The history of the Church has shown the danger of such organizations, and therefore we are in favour of the preservation of the independence of each Church. Still, if it were a question of polity only, we should not regard it as vital. The controversy becomes one of vital importance only when a Divine authority is claimed for an order of men supposed to be endowed with some mystic sanctity, and invested consequently with prerogative and power inconsistent with the liberty of the individual, and sure ultimately to be fatal to the spiritual idea of the Church itself.

In the opposition to sacerdotalism we should probably have the sympathy of Dr. Hatch himself. If he differs from us it is on another ground. His view is that of the practical man, possibly with some Erastian sympathies. "The ecclesiastical institutions which have come down to us are, even more than the political institutions, a sacred inheritance which we may legitimately endeavour to improve, but which we cannot lightly abandon." It is pretty certain that in this conservative England there is nothing which can plead a long antiquity on its side which will be lightly abandoned. We always have had, and it is right we should have, careful consideration before we cut loose our moorings. But surely as the creation of institutions not in harmony with the primitive and Scriptural ideal is justified on the ground of "his-

torical circumstances," the same argument may legitimately be employed in favour of a return to the old. If regard be had to this point alone, the argument for the abandonment of a claim to nationality on the part of a Church which has long ceased to be the Church of the nation, and which has no spiritual hold upon any fraction, even approaching to one-half of the nation, becomes irresistible.

Looking beyond the question of Establishment, Dr. Hatch speaks of "the Church as a Divine institution," as distinguished from "large bodies of earnest men who, being unable to see a justification for this or that particular point of difference, have separated themselves from the main body of Christians and formed separate communities." But with all his desire to be fair, our author fails here to set forth the strongest ground of this dissent. With us it is not some "particular point" of change or modification to which we object, but to the organization of this "main body of Christians" into the "Holy Catholic Church." To this we trace most of the evils by which Christendom is afflicted. By establishing a standard of orthodoxy—that is, by raising the opinions of the majority into a creed by which heretics are to be separated from Catholics—it has made the sectarian divisions over which it laments, but which it has found no way of suppressing except by excommunication and persecution. It is eminently satisfactory to find that Dr. Hatch cuts the ground away so completely from the Catholic theory. Whatever position he may be disposed himself to take in relation to it, now that he has to deal with it as an existing institution, at least he will give no countenance to the idea of a Divine right in Episcopacy. So far from treating the present state of things as of heavenly origin, he shows how it was all shaped by forces which were essentially mundane in spirit and in form alike. The changes were gradual, and followed the line of revolution in the government and in the condition of the people. Here is the account of the cardinal change by which "bishops ceased to be appointed except in cities or county towns"—that is, became diocesan instead of being the heads of individual churches :

The causes of that difference are no doubt to be found in the manner in which the Roman Empire decayed in the provinces of the West. To the original position of the empire in these provinces some parallel may be found in the British rule in India; but the manner of its breaking up is the more difficult to describe because no approximate analogy to it exists. In Gaul and Spain every important city had its colony of Roman settlers, in whose hands were not only the executive and judicial functions of the imperial government, but also, for the most part, the municipal administration. In the empire of the first three centuries the Roman colony formed also the centre of that worship of the Emperor which, rather than the worship of Jupiter and Mars, was the official religion. In the later empire it formed the centre and nucleus of Christianity. Like the British in India whose bishops in the Presidency towns have been themselves Europeans, surrounded for the most part by a European clergy, the bishops of the chief cities of the provinces of the West were mainly Roman, surrounded by a Roman clergy, and though they were not without a missionary element, they ministered mainly to the wants of the Roman population. Outside the centres of that population they can hardly be said to have existed on the Roman. Here and there, on the large estates of Roman owners, there was a chapel for Christian service; but the mass of the Celtic peasantry was unconverted. The familiar word pagan or "villager" comes to us from this time, and indicates this feature of it. Christianity was the religion of the governing classes and their immediate dependents; it belonged to the cities and not to the country; it was almost a part of the imperial régime. Upon this state of things came the slowly rolling waves of Teutonic conquest. That conquest was rather an amalgamation of races under a Teutonic king than a complete subversion of the existing state of society. . . . The general result was that in the cities was gathered together almost all that survived of Rome; the schools preserved the Roman tongue, the courts preserved Roman law, the Church preserved Roman Christianity. Of all this survival of Roman life, the bishop of the *civitas* was the centre. Round him the aristocracy of the old Roman families naturally gathered. He symbolized to them their past glories and their ancient liberties. He was their refuge in trouble, and their chief shield against oppression. His house was not infrequently the old pretorium, the residence of the Roman governor. Even his dress was that of a Roman official. In him the empire still lived. Nor did his position rest wholly upon sentiment. There was in addition the power which came of judicial status and of wealth (pp. 9-12).

This is so characteristic a specimen of Dr. Hatch's argument and mode of writing that we have given it even at this considerable length. The compactness of the form

is scarcely less remarkable than the fulness of the information and the force of the reasoning. As it is here, so everywhere throughout the book. We feel that we can hardly commend it too highly. It is so fair in temper, so clear in its expositions of fact and principle, so full of information, that its value cannot easily be exaggerated. It may disappoint and even offend heated partizans, but it will be greatly prized by all students. It is as honest as it is scholarly, and that is no small praise for such a work.

THE INFLUENCE OF SPIRITUAL STATES UPON BIBLICAL CRITICISM.*

THE quality of Biblical criticism, comprehending under this name men's judgments on the authenticity, authority, and interpretation of the books of the Bible, has exerted an enormous influence on their spiritual states and Divine relationships. The rejection of Jesus as the Messiah by the Jewish people, the spiritual state indicated and stereotyped by that rejection, and their awful experiences in exile during the last eighteen hundred years, have been the direct results of their ancient system of Biblical criticism. They "erred, not knowing the Scriptures,"—that is, they neglected one half of them, and put a false interpretation on the other half; they therefore "knew not the day of their visitation," nor the Hope of Israel when He came. Their system of criticism was a "veil upon the face of Moses" and the prophets. In the same way in modern Christendom different methods of handling the Scriptures have resulted in very different views of God's revelation and of godliness. Romanism, with its church-tradition governing the interpretation, Unitarianism, with its naturalistic tendencies, and perhaps we ought to add the older English Puritanism, with its notion of a universal mechanical

* A lecture delivered at the opening of the Winter Session at New College, October, 1887.

inspiration, pledged to all sorts of minute harmonies of the evangelical history, down almost to the jots and tittles of the authorized English Version—all alike demonstrate the influence of Biblical criticism on the spiritual life both in faith and practice.

But my object to-night is rather to attempt a few observations on the obverse side of this subject—on the influence of spiritual states on the criticism of the Bible.

All who have watched recent discussions on the Old Testament must have been struck with the growing importance assigned to this spiritual factor, both in determining the value and authority of the Scripture writers themselves, and the weight and authority of the scholars who criticise them. It seems to be acknowledged that a man who is an eminent Orientalist may greatly "lack the vision and the faculty divine" which would inspire and illuminate his criticism of those particular writings. Though "speaking with tongues more than they all," a man may still, through infinite conceit, talk wildly in every one of these languages, because, as Selden said, "No man is the wiser for his learning." He may be spiritually even in the same position as those Jewish Rabbinical scholars who mistook the Lord Jesus Christ for a demoniac or a lunatic. Thus also it is now confessed that a marvellous gift for minute verbal criticism may mislead the critic as to the innermost character of any writing, through the lack of some vigorous *literary* and dramatic perception accompanying his gift; and again, that a learned man may go far astray in *chronological* criticism of Scripture apart from some sound attainments in comparative archæology—the knowledge of ancient Egypt and Assyria being of high value in judging of the possibilities of contemporary Hebrew civilization; or, on the other hand, a scholar may come to this study with such an overplus of *metaphysical* preconceptions on the nature of man, or of God and His ways, that it is not in the power of mere prophets and apostles to teach him anything; and he simply melts them down and runs them into his own moulds of thought.

But the danger of false judgment in Biblical criticism,

from total or partial ignorance of Oriental languages, or from too much dependence on the knowledge of them, or from lack of literary faculty, or of archæological learning, or an excess of metaphysics—all sink into comparative unimportance beside the far more serious lack of spiritual feeling and spiritual insight. The influence of spiritual states on Biblical criticism is a fact more noteworthy even than the influence of Biblical criticism on the religious life of mankind.

This idea, then, which I will try to develop a little, pervades the Scriptures themselves. We read that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." "Open Thou mine eyes," said the Psalmist of the exile, "that I may discern wondrous things out of Thy law." "Seal up the law among the disciples," said Isaiah; adding the more awful sentence: "Give this people eyes, that they may not see; and ears, that they may not hear." "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." Christ and His apostles re-echo the same lesson. "Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you;" this ignominious image being intended to designate not *only* the unlearned opponents of the gospel. Again He says, "To him that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." "Murmur not among yourselves; no man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." "They shall be all taught of God: every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto Me." Finally, the great apostle declares: "The natural man comprehendeth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things."

The perceptions of this spiritual faculty are of an authoritative nature when common to spiritual men; they cannot submit to the judgment either of sense or mere psychical intelligence. "He himself is judged of no man." And this general truth is not invalidated either by its

exaggerations, or by our inability to assign an exact formula which shall define the requisite proportions of learning and spiritual sense required in criticising the Sacred Word.

The function of the Church teacher, then, is to furnish a living voice to the records of Divine revelation—to be a medium between the sacred historians, prophets, and apostles, and the people to whom God has sent His Son as Redeemer and King. But this function of teacher is entangled with a double difficulty, arising out of the surrounding presence of spiritually blind guides—that is, of parties corresponding, in character, in every age, and not least in modern times, to the old sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees in the days of Christ; namely, the formal traditional party of religious commentators and practitioners, and its reactionary product, the sceptical and destructive party of critics and thinkers. And just as Christ, the *Living Word*, maintained an independent position between them, and “committed himself” to neither, because each consisted of learned men whose motives were corrupt, whose desire was not for “the praise of God,” but of mortals; who “could not believe, because they sought honour one of another;” so is it still in relation to the *written Word* in our own time, when the Pharisaic and the Sadducean parties still divide European society between them.

Our present danger is undoubtedly chiefly from the influence of the latter. For our function as expositors of Holy Scripture becomes every day more arduous, in face of an opposition formidable in its literary accomplishments, still more formidable because it professes, not scepticism hostile to all religion, but rather pure criticism strictly so called; but it is a criticism more ruthless in its anti-supernaturalism than has ever been encountered before. The attack on the old ideas is many-sided, and always, of course, professedly scientific. Yet the result is uniformly to discredit, by a double action, first the Old Testament and then the New—to throw backward the processes of Creation, including that of man, till they are lost in the fire-mists of the past eternity; thus abolishing the notion of a “Fall,” and with it, as Dr. Martineau maintains, the very idea of

redemption ; and then, having thrown these creative processes far enough backward, to bring downward the date and authorship of the Pentateuch and other sacred writings to an age so recent as practically to deprive the Old Testament of nearly all historic, much more of Divine, authority. So that the divine light which shone for St. Paul and his fellow-apostles, and for the Lord Himself, on the faces of Moses and the prophets, is now exchanged under these views for a general fog—in which are seen only the shadowy figures of a party of “Jehovists,” and “Elohists,” and “Sacerdotalists,” and Redactors, dimly straggling about in the gloom, chiefly of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries before Christ ; occupied in producing, as divine revelations, dim oral traditions, or old Babylonian fables, or new priestly codes ; or uttering deliberate forgeries in the name of Moses, or false Deuteronomies in the age of Josiah ; or, later on, composing supposititious poems, as “second Isaiahs,” pretending to foretell the victories of Cyrus after they had happened ; or elaborating an extraordinary mythus of a miraculous Exodus, which was simply a legend founded on natural events ; of a forty years’ desert-wandering, maintained by bread from heaven which never fell ; or, still more recently, in the Macedonian times, composing historical novels claiming to be “prophecies of Daniel,” although written after the events ; or training Jewish ambition and superstition to expect a Messiah by predictions which tended to fulfil themselves. And the larger part of this criticism comes to us at last backed up by the authority of a few distinguished men, who declare that all Germany believes it, and that all respectable scholars in England are marching in their train. But Dr. Bissell, of Hartford,* in his elaborate work on the age and structure of the Pentateuch, Professor Green, of Princeton, Dr. Keil, and Dr. Payne Smith, Dean of Canterbury, have shown considerable reason for qualifying that sweeping assertion.

* The work of Dr. Bissell was published by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, with high praise from *The Spectator*, in 1885, and Dr. Payne Smith’s work is published in the Religious Tract Society’s series of “Present Day Tracts.”

No doubt this report concerning all Germany's belief seems at first a faith-confounding announcement to make to old-fashioned believers, and a somewhat discouraging one for theological beginners, especially when you listen to the highwayman-like tone of the scholars who are now boldly calling on English Christendom to stand and deliver up its old belief in an authentic miraculous Biblical history.

And yet on the whole there seems no reason for panic, nor even for serious alarm. Let us keep our minds cool and honest, let us read on both sides of this controversy, not only for the attack, but the defence; let us read diligently that wonderful work, the Revised Version of the Old Testament, where you have, in English, substantially "the law and the prophets" *as they were in Christ's time*—in which He believed, and on which He rested His claim to be the Saviour of the world; and let us "pray to God always," like Cornelius. Then, if spiritual men, we shall, I think, soon discover that those great scholars of France, Germany, America, and England, are right who maintain that the outcry of triumph raised on behalf of the Dutchmen and Scotsmen, who suppose that they have already nearly made an end of an authentic Pentateuch, has been raised somewhat too early in the conflict. For it is the manner of many modern writers almost to deify for the moment some poet, or statesman, or biblical critic, or scientific man, or even preacher of their own time; who soon afterwards is cast aside and forgotten, like the stuffed and waxen images of the old kings and queens of England, once shown to me by Dean Stanley, stowed away in glass cases in the upper cupboards of Westminster Abbey. But the true light dawns again after every eclipse; for though the evils of controversy are great, they are all temporary, while its benefits are all permanent.

Let us start with the fact to which I have just referred. Let us reason backwards from Christ the Lord. In approaching from our time the study of revelation, the first figure which meets us is the most glorious—that of our Lord Jesus Christ, who claimed to be the Son of God. In the Gospels we have four presentations of His person and teach-

ing. These one and all agree in declaring that to Him "Moses and the prophets" were so real and true that "not a jot or tittle should pass till all be fulfilled." His appeal was always to the Old Testament Scriptures. And after He rose from the dead, He "expounded" to His disciples, in the "writings of Moses, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets, the things concerning Himself." At every step we have to remember that this "Lord of glory" incessantly affirmed the truth and honesty of the Old Testament Scriptures *as we have them*, and the reality of Messianic prophecy.

Does any professor of divination intend to tell us plainly that Jesus, the Son of God, was mistaken, and was resting ultimately only on what is called (in the October *Contemporary*) "oral tradition of the eighth or ninth century B.C., illustrated by such historical and geographical lights as were accessible to the Jahvist and the Elohist of those ages"? "The question is," he says, "how far oral tradition of the eighth or ninth century before Christ can be relied on as good evidence for events of the time of Moses." Christ, throughout the four Gospels, says there is *no question* about these events. He treats them as absolute facts, and attributes the Pentateuch to Moses. Which of these two authorities is right?

The business of breaking down and discrediting the Bible as a whole is a far more difficult and complicated undertaking than either hostile critics or lukewarm friends sometimes imagine; especially since evangelical scholars have learned to avoid the old dangerous exaggerations, and to allow for *honest* Biblical compilation and partial editorship. In order to break down the Bible narrative as a whole, you have to deal with a prolonged *spiritual* structure, a history extending over a base-line, say, of fourteen hundred years, including the establishment both of Judaism and Christianity; and you have to assign satisfactory reasons at every principal point for rejecting each recorded miraculous event, or event depending on the reality of miracles. You have to assign satisfactory reasons for believing that the Hebrew people, *either in earlier or later ages*, could have been persuaded to

accept as their national history, if false, the account of the stupendous wonders said to have been wrought for them in Egypt and the desert—I say, either in earlier times, when they lived nearer to the alleged events, and could reject the story if manifestly untrue, or in later centuries, when increased education and intelligence would have rendered them more critical, and so enabled them readily to explode the baseless fables. You have to show why the Hebrew people could have been persuaded more easily to accept these marvellous and graphically told accounts of the plagues of Egypt, the Red Sea passage, and the desert wanderings, than suppose a similarly unlettered people, say our own Saxon forefathers of the *eighth or tenth centuries*, could have been persuaded to believe the strange story that in A.D. 450, the *fifth* century of our era, God had led *their* forefathers, Hengist, Horsa, and company, to England, through the divided waters of the German Ocean, by a pillar of fire by night, fed them with bread from heaven for forty years, during the conquest of Britain, and passed over their firstborn on the night when He slew all the first-born of their enemies; and how they could have been so deeply impressed with this faith as to lead their Saxon descendants willingly to observe three annual festivals ever afterwards—in the spring, at pentecost, and in the autumn—visibly commemorating by symbols the astounding events that never happened; festivals, in fact, such as the Jews have observed certainly for 2500 years until the present day, leaving open for the present the question of 3000 years. No solution, so far as I know, is offered of these difficulties, and the Jewish nation everywhere rejects with scorn the idea that the commemorations are unhistorical, the most learned Jews being foremost in the denial.

Then, again, there is the difficulty of explaining how it was that all the greatest men of the Hebrew race (men so great that even the most illustrious teachers of the nineteenth century feel their own spiritual inferiority)—kings, psalmists, moralists, prophets of both the divided kingdoms, and greatest of all, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived in one common undetected delusion,

upholding from age to age a religious system built on the false basis of their historic reality. As was well said lately by the sharp-sighted editor of *The British Weekly*, "Jesus Christ rooted Himself and His religion in the Old Testament. Whatever Jesus believed about the Old Testament we must believe: we shall be found right in the end if we think thoughts of His thinking. 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'"

The younger students of Biblical history may, I think, assure themselves that there *must be some great mistake somewhere*, in the sweeping arguments of writers who are for reducing the more glorious regalia of the Old Testament to the same category as M. Shapira's Jerusalem antiquities, only dating the manufactures in the ages of Joel, Josiah, and Ezra. For is there not, at the other end of this long base-line, Christianity also to be accounted for—coming into the world under the full blaze of the Roman civilization, and at the beginning of modern history?—Christianity offering itself to the world not as an isolated revelation, but as the divinely promised completion of the Mosaic, regal, and prophetic economy; the central figure of Christ presented to us in a glory of miracles, which, as they certainly could not have been invented by a party of illiterate Galilean fishermen, so they were never denied as facts by hostile contemporaries, but only explained away by the Jews as the result of black magic. And it is undeniable that in order to overthrow either Judaism or Christianity, as real historical Divine revelations, you must succeed in overthrowing *both* of them—which, after 1800 years' experience, seems to be a difficult undertaking, whether among Jews or Christians. For the two collections of sacred writings, when carefully studied, are seen to be both independent and connected—unlike, yet homogeneous, so as to form an organic unity, like a vast bridge resting on two solid girders; so closely locked together in its various parts, that it remains unshaken, even if you could prove as well as assert such theories as the fraudulent forgery of the Book of Deuteronomy by Hilkiah the priest in the days of Josiah, with the imputed motive of

priestly zeal, or any other motive. Surely even beginners in theological science may, unproved, assure themselves steadfastly of as much as this.

And then there is another remarkable circumstance—that the subversive criticism which occupies itself with the Old Testament Judaism seldom employs itself upon apostolic Christianity; and *vice versâ*, that the scholars who attack the supernatural in Christianity seldom occupy themselves with Judaism. They do not work together as “partners” ought to do, like the apostolic fishermen with overloaded boats, but generally conduct independent critical businesses in the line of anti-supernaturalistic adventure. Is not this, perhaps, because it seems a much more formidable enterprise to undertake the overthrow of both together than of either singly? For the two Testaments form one Divine, supernatural revelation, delivered “at sundry times and in divers manners,” so that it is not enough to undermine one of the corners of this enormous pyramid, so long in building; you must succeed in undermining the four corners, along the immense base-lines, and the central death chamber of the king as well—let us rather say the death and resurrection chamber of King Messiah, the true Osiris—before you can really shake the solid foundations. Until you have done thus much, educated and simple people alike will continue to read and believe the wonderful series of Old Testament historians and prophets, as well as the evangelists, who fight their own battle in all languages by their tone of simplicity and truthfulness; just as men believe Thucydides or Tacitus, without denying, perhaps, some minor mistakes, but not raising incessant questions as to their ability, or honesty, or probable cooking of the Greek and Roman histories. No long succession of national annalists were ever yet in a condition of unvaried credulity and stupidity, nor in an unbroken conspiracy for 1400 years purposely to deceive their fellow-countrymen, much less mankind, even with regard to a supernatural revelation ending in a Christ.

But we ought not to despair of the ultimate faith of these eminent antagonists of the Mosaic writings, since they

already exhibit a wonderful power of belief even in their present speculations. Their belief may have taken a wrong form, and may be governed by mistaken principles; but they do believe the most miraculous things as to Jewish and Christian history; and when this believing power of theirs is turned in another direction they will probably find little difficulty in accepting the far less exacting phenomena of the old historical Judaism and Christianity. The men who believe that that marvellous Book of Psalms, lying, like a quartz-reef, full of diamonds and gold, deeply imbedded in the very heart of the Old Testament—with its lofty celebration of Jehovah's glory in the earth and heaven; its passionate confessions of sin, and pleadings for mercy; its repeated thanksgivings for the Egyptian deliverance; its fervent emotions in the temple worship, still kindling the whole modern world of worshippers by its inspirations; its spiritual zeal for God and His law; covering, perhaps, in its authorship a thousand years of Jewish history; the men who can believe that this fiery stream of love and devotion sprang out of a history which was totally false in its facts, a mere embroglio of doubtful, unwritten tradition; the men, again, who can think that the Old Testament *biographies* of every age since the Exodus, as sharply cut as so many portrait-statues or pictures, (every one of these biographies implying in its structure, within and without, the reality of the public miraculous history of the nation), can be explained apart from that history, when you could not account for any one even of the heroes of Plutarch without admitting the general reality of Greek and Roman story as its basis:—the men, above all, who can believe that the holy and wonderful CHRIST, to whom all the Old Testament history as it stands was as real as God Himself—and the fabric of apostolic Christianity and its Church—all rose out of such a rubbishing dust-heap of deceptions and delusions as the *Encyclopædia Britannica* leaves us for the result of its Old Testament criticism;—why, these great writers have, I say, herein already exhibited a power of believing in miracles of one sort, which encourages the hope in humbler Christians that, under other spiritual influences, they may come

to believe in miracles of a loftier quality, and in a continuous supernatural revelation which is both honest and Divine.

The present state of things, then, compels us much to insist, for our own benefit, on the influence of the spiritual life on the criticism of Holy Scripture, in its tone, its methods, and its results. The other side of the truth, the influence of Biblical criticism on the spiritual life of Christendom, cannot be treated now, but has been illustrated in a painful manner whenever this criticism has been predominantly of the destructive quality. Men's spiritual states have at least as much to do as their literary furniture with their critical estimate of the contents of the Bible in its successive portions.

Of course I do not desire to be understood as uttering a single word in disparagement of the just claims and duties of a learned and a bold, because honest, criticism. No height or depth of love to God, no keenness of spiritual vision alone, can settle, apart from criticism, the question as to the sources of some parts of the books of Moses, or the proportions of sacred prehistoric tradition, of original writing, and subsequent editorial work, in their composition; or the date and authorship of Ecclesiastes, or of the Fourth Gospel, or of any other book of Scripture, or twenty similar Biblical questions. But what we boldly affirm is that along with such literary criticism, and inspiring it, there is a great place for the concurrent criticism of the spiritual sense in all ages of the Church, in order to assist the solution of the problem—whether honest men *would* have agreed to the wholesale personation of Moses or St. John, as in the Book of Deuteronomy and the Fourth Gospel; and whether dishonest men *could* have achieved it.

And as for that failure of the law in the earlier centuries of the history of Israel, whence some now would draw the inference of its non-existence at that period, the solution must be sought in something deeper than verbal criticism—in that inherent inefficacy of law to reform mankind which St. Paul expounds to us. *When the law came, sin revived,*

and in the prolonged attempts to shake off its yoke, until re-imposed by ages of sorrowful experience, and written afresh in the heart of Israel by the softening influences of chastisement, of Divine grace and love, and of Messianic hope, after the return from the exile. But this is a line of thought open only to men of some spiritual understanding.

Louis Kossuth frequently lays it down as a maxim in politics that a nation in war would often be stronger for the sacrifice of some of its alliances. Assuredly the Christian Church would be in a far stronger position if it could shake off the connection of some of its professed supporters and friends, specially of the higher critical and literary description. One of the many evil consequences of training up whole nations in the pretence of being Protestant or Roman Catholic Christians, has been to place a large literary class, many of them men of the highest ability as to natural genius, but many of them without grace, in the profession of University theologians and authorized interpreters of Scripture, and with the frequent result of handing over the Ark of the covenant to the Philistines,—of handing over the Holy Scriptures to the tender mercies of men, it may be, full of self-consciousness, daring antagonism, and religious destructiveness; the quality of their minute and unworthy criticism reminding you sometimes of nothing so much as of the golden mice, which those uncircumcised Philistines of old were required to send back with the Ark, into which they had dared to look with unpurified eyes; when God smote them with shameful diseases, and allowed their harvests to be ravaged by swarms of small vermin of the character denoted by these compulsory oblations *in memoriam*.

It is nothing less than confounding to a man who knows Jesus Christ, and lives in communion with God and His Word, to look into some of the monographs set forth to-day under the name of Biblical criticism. You seem to see once more the blind and stolid Pompey boldly stalking into the Holy of Holies, and finding "*nothing*" there—*nothing* on the spot where Isaiah, seven hundred years

before, had beheld the vision of the six-winged seraphim veiling their faces in the presence of the Most Holy One. Let us, then, resolutely demand of ourselves, and all others, as the first condition of Biblical criticism, that the critic himself shall be a devout man of God. When a party of scholars, whether English or German or French, undertake to analyze and reduce to their elements the books of the Old Testament or the New, but who, notwithstanding marvellous linguistic acuteness, often remind you, in their contemptuous tones and utter lack of tenderness, of nothing so much as of a gang of anatomists engaged in the dissection of a dead dog—only not always with so equal seriousness of purpose; it ought not to require much insistence to persuade Christians that no unquestioning submission is due to such criticisms. For the holiness and elevation of spirit, from first to last, in the Old and New Testament writings, and tone of good faith that prevails everywhere, is a matter on which readers of moral intelligence can judge for themselves, even in early life. And when great scholars prove themselves insensible to this tone of sanctity, sincerity, and reverence for God, which not only Ezra, but all the prophets, uniformly display—or dismiss it as cant—they naturally incur the suspicion both of learned and unlearned who have retained their moral perceptions in a Christian condition. Depend upon it, *no rogue*, literary or ecclesiastical, had anything to do with writing the histories of the Patriarchs, or of Joseph, or the Book of Deuteronomy—that perpetual marvel of holy, divine life and power.

It must be, then, in our dealings with professedly Biblical scholars as in our dealings with open unbelievers; there must often in the last resort be an appeal to men's spiritual sense against a line of special pleading, *involving the imputation of dishonesty and "management" to the great saints and prophets of the Bible*. And this species of moral appeal often avails when no minute verbal replies to trifling or naturalistic objections are forthcoming. A Jewish missionary of rare endowments, combining the dramatic humour of Gavazzi with some noble sparkle of

the fervent faith and love of St. Paul, was lately engaged in friendly controversy on the subject of Christianity with some learned members of the Israelitish settlement of New York, where seventy thousand of them are residing; and the first point which they agreed to discuss was the reported miraculous birth of Jesus, alleged in the New Testament. These New York Jewish Rabbis put it plainly thus to their brother Jew, Mr. Matthews: "Now, would you, as a man of the world, a man of honesty and experience, accept for one moment such a story, told by any other young woman in the world, concerning the birth of her son, this which as you Christians profess to accept from the unsupported assertion of Mary the Nazarene? You know you would not! How then can you expect us to believe it?" Mr. Matthews instantly replied, with a flash of inspired genius and spiritual insight, "No, I certainly would *not* believe such a story, told by any other young woman in the world, concerning the birth of her child. And more than that, I would not believe it on the unsupported testimony of Mary herself. But," he added, after a few moments' silence, "was there any other young woman on earth who ever had *such a Son*?" The winged arrow went straight to their hearts, to their consciences, to their better natures, to their knowledge of Jesus and of Christianity, and of its wonderful history; and they acknowledged by their admiring silence that there had been no other such man as the Son of Mary. Facts are sometimes stronger than abstractions, and the soul is often a surer critic than the niggling intelligence of a cold-blooded naturalistic grammar-learning.

It is thus also by a bold appeal to men's moral conscience that you may often defend the Old Testament, not only against learned and accomplished men, but from the audacious slanders of foul-mouthed, vulgar freethinkers, more effectually than by elaborate criticisms. No single objection is more vehemently pressed in some of the halls of science, and in popular infidel newspapers, against the Divine origin of the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, than that which arises from what are denounced as

its filthy and immoral stories, and the physical lucidity of its Mosaic legislation. But this fact stands in the way of the accusation—that these freethinkers hate the Bible with all their hearts; whereas, if it were a bad and polluting book, they would love the Bible, since they love immoral books. Their hatred of the Bible, and ceaseless zeal to discredit it, is plain proof that whenever the Scriptures record men's evil deeds, or prohibit them in plain language, this is not in the interest of impurity, but in the interest of good morals; just as when the judge on the bench uses equally plain language in the trial of offences against decency and order.

The naked truths which are found in the Bible, and the reports of wicked actions performed in ancient barbarous times, which darken the pages of the primitive books of Moses and the Judges—and which create so violent a revolt in the minds of the modern delicate readers of Zola and Shakespeare—deal nevertheless with a medical plainness with those secret realities of physical life which underlie all the refinements of modern phraseology and conduct in all lands, as in all ages—those facts in the constitution of men and women which are the mainsprings of existence, and the chief seats of good and evil character in personal and national development. And it is the neglect of these lessons in modern education, through a general conspiracy of silence between young and old, which causes half the disasters and disgraces of our modern civilization. The Old Testament bears in this, as in so many other respects, the infallible mark of proceeding substantially from the Author of nature, the Fountain of law, and the Father of man's salvation. And no man can point to one single phrase, or precept, or narrative in the Bible (wonderful to relate this of a series of ancient books) from end to end, which looks like trifling with vice, or an intended incentive to impurity, such as you find in so many pages of the Greek and Roman writers. The quadrangular area of human life is painted there with its black and white squares, and it is covered with black and white pieces in the biographies of good and evil men in their true propor-

tions; but it is quite clear that the motive of the Mind which moves the winning pieces is to give the victory to virtue and godliness, and to intensify men's hatred of all that is impure, unnatural, and unholy. This is a fact; otherwise it would have been impossible to stamp—in every language—upon the books, collected into one volume, the title of “the *Holy Bible*.” Had it been otherwise than holy, that title would long ago have caused the Bible to be laughed out of the world. But the human conscience responds like the angels of God, “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.*” This whole temple of truth is full of His glory!

A little common sense, commingled with the spiritual perception to which I have referred, is no ill qualification for the defence of the Old Testament against some other modern objections.

Three years ago a lecturer for the Christian Evidence Society was discoursing at the Hall of Science, in Old Street Road, to some of Mr. Bradlaugh's followers among the skilled mechanics of that district. He had enforced the truthfulness of the history by insisting upon the striking conformity of the Biblical references to Egypt, to its political conditions in successive generations, now ascertained by our fuller knowledge of the hieroglyphic language and history—a conviction which seems to penetrate most deeply into the minds of those scholars who are specialists in this erudition. Well, after the lecture on Egypt and the Bible was ended, opportunity was given for comments by the hearers in the Hall of Science. One of them, an earnest and interesting man in middle age, who had read somewhat on Egyptian discovery, rose and said, that after all, he felt himself totally unable to believe the story of the Exodus, if on no other ground, yet because of this decisive argument, that the monuments of Egypt contained no inscription or memorial whatever of so great an event as the Israelitish oppression, or of the overthrow of Pharaoh and the miraculous destruction of his army in the Red Sea. This produced hearty and general applause. It was, however, answered to him that no nation has ever

been known to set up memorials of their own wickedness and tyranny, much less of their own disastrous defeats. The permanent convincing memorial of the truth of the *Origines* of Israel in Genesis, and of the Exodus from Egypt, was the *history* of the people of Israel, who testified to their own servitude to the Pharaohs by the permanent Passover, and to the deliverance, which must have been accomplished by some Power equal to the forcible rescue of a nation of valuable labourers and slaves from the grasp of the most formidable military monarchy in the world of that day. This fact, that defeat is commemorated by silence, and victory by public monuments, was further shown by the example of Waterloo. England abounds with literary and monumental memorials of the decisive battle. Bridges, streets, crescents, railway stations, public monuments everywhere perpetuate the memory of Wellington and his victory. But in Paris, in France, the name of Waterloo is never seen or heard. You will look in vain for a single monument or inscription which perpetuates that overthrow. Would it be safe to conclude that there had been no battle of Waterloo in which Napoleon was overthrown? No, you look to the victors for the monuments. It was thus with Egypt and Israel. It is only just to our Old Street auditors to say that they frankly admitted by cheers the fairness and sufficiency of the explanation; but this was an example of the rule that popular objections made on the authority of learned sceptics can often be effectually removed by an unlearned appeal to common sense and common honesty, and that the most victorious defence of the Bible before the common people, against the destructive criticism of men without spiritual insight, is often found upon the very surface of the Bible itself, in that tone of truth and godliness which all can appreciate, and which is entirely inconsistent with theories of late traditional elaboration by Elohist, Jehovist, or Sacerdotalist dealers in folklore and imposture. A literary criticism, springing from a secret hostility of men to the supernatural and divine in their souls, is necessarily fatal to fair dealing with the Bible.

Allow me, in conclusion, dear fellow-labourers in the study of the Divine Word in these difficult times, to remind you again, at the opening of this session, of St. Paul's words, "The natural man comprehendeth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The knowledge of God in our own souls is the clue to all higher knowledge beside in nature and in grace :

What though I trace each herb and flower
That drinks the morning dew,
Did I not own Jehovah's power,
How vain were all I knew !

Apart from this Divine illumination, we shall lose our way in the labyrinth of this life, and, still worse, we shall lose our way in the study of that Revelation which alone can guide us into life eternal. And then, being ourselves "blind guides," we shall lose all power of leading the people in the way everlasting.

EDWARD WHITE.

DISSENTING MINISTERS AND POLITICS.

WHAT do Dissenting ministers preach ? There are plenty of people who tell us that they do not preach the gospel, and the Bishop of Lichfield has a pleasant theory of his own that the political sermons, to which they are addicted, are alienating from them the more spiritual members of their churches. This is one side of the attack which is at present being directed against Congregationalists, for it is at them and the Baptists that these criticisms are aimed, and it must be met. Our friend, Rev. Edward White, has dealt with it in the columns of *The Times*, in his usual trenchant style, and has conclusively disposed of the allegation as put forth by the bishop. The plain fact is, that if Congregational ministers took to preaching politics

they would speedily be left without congregations to preach to. Into this controversy there is no necessity that we should enter at length. It is, after all, a question of fact, and can only be settled by actual evidence. One point, however, is admitted. The Church Defence Society has its annual Sunday, the Liberation Society has never suggested anything of the kind, and if it did its suggestions would be flouted. Every consideration, both of high Christian expediency and of mere policy, would prevent Dissenting ministers from turning their pulpits into political platforms. So strong, however, is the impression to the contrary that it seems difficult to dislodge it, especially as it lends itself so readily to party purposes. It is open to doubt, however, whether, even from his own point of view, Lord Salisbury did wisely in giving it the sanction of his authority. A master of flouts and gibes and jeers cannot be expected to be wise at all times, and in treating Nonconformists as the natural enemies of his party he certainly was not wise. The future of Toryism depends upon the extent to which its chief is able to conciliate the Liberal Unionists, and, indeed, to allure them gently on until they find themselves absorbed in that which they have spent their whole past life in resisting. Now among these are some Nonconformists—their number is not considerable, and very few of them can be regarded as representatives of Nonconformist policy—but still they are Nonconformists, and it can hardly be necessary to insist on the use to which they might be put by a wise Tory leader. Lord Salisbury, it may be truly said, is the first Tory minister for many a day who could boast of any appreciable element of support from Congregationalists. There have always been sporadic cases of a strange Toryism among us, but *de minimis non curat lex*. It is a new and strange thing in the earth that there should be even a small section (and it is very small) of Congregationalists standing aloof from the Liberal party, and giving their support to a Government which, if it had its own will, would show but scant consideration for Dissenters, which inherits all the worst traditions of the bigotry of the past, and which is not more resolute in its opposition to the

demands of Ireland than in its determination to resist any advance in the direction of religious equality. It is curious, as illustrating the strangely disturbed state of party relations at present, that the tendency among Wesleyan Methodists seems to be directly opposite. Without pretending to pronounce on so delicate a question as that of the proportionate strength of Liberals and Tories among the laymen of the Connexion which has arisen out of the signatures of the Circular recently issued by some of its leading representatives, we can confidently say that the response elicited showed a remarkable advance of Liberal opinion in Methodist circles. It would be extremely unfortunate for the future of Congregationalism if, while Wesleyans are moving more towards the people, there should be any disposition on the part of any large number among ourselves to range themselves on the opposite side. There is no indication of this at present, but some Congregationalists are "Liberal Unionists," and as one of them frankly acknowledged to us the other day, the tendency of the unnatural alliance between them and the Tory party, which at present bars all progress, is to develop a Conservative feeling.

If Lord Salisbury were wise, his object would be to help forward this drift by avoiding everything which could alarm the jealous susceptibilities of men who have not yet shaken off the influence of all their old associations. But it would seem impossible for him to exercise even this small amount of self-restraint. Perhaps he despairs of securing any important accession of strength from our ranks, and has the insight to perceive that the Nonconformist who supports him must be unfaithful to his own principles, and as he is convinced that the antagonism between us is irreconcilable, has become reckless in the prosecution of the warfare. If this be his mode of reasoning, he is right in his premises, but wrong in his conclusions. The policy of his attack on Nonconformist communities was as mistaken as its statements were unfounded. It must, indeed, have required some effort of self-control when he deliberately committed himself to the assertion that the Established

Church was of no party, whereas the Nonconformist Churches place their organizations at the service of the Radical party. Possibly his lordship had in his mind the resolutions passed by various representative Nonconformist bodies in opposition to the policy of Coercion. We have no desire to shrink from the fullest measure of responsibility for such action, but it does not justify his lordship's assertion. The real character of our free assemblies is misunderstood by outsiders, who regard them as Church courts, whereas they are really fraternal conferences on all matters of common interest. The Church meeting is our one Church court, and if there are cases in which these meetings are used for political purposes we can only say that we have no knowledge of them. The pulpit is the great instrument of our organization, and Lord Salisbury may have intended to suggest what the Bishop of Lichfield has distinctly asserted, that it is used on behalf of the Liberal Party. Such a charge we can only meet with the most positive and emphatic denial. It would be absurd to say that political sermons are never preached in Dissenting pulpits, but we unhesitatingly assert they are extremely exceptional, and that they would, except under circumstances which were very rare, be strongly condemned by the public opinion both of ministers and congregations. At times when there has been a danger that the nation would be dragged into war, our pulpits have been pronounced in their deliverances, and our ministers who felt stirred in their consciences on the point would have been unfaithful to their trust had they been silent. So also when questions vitally affecting Christian life or religious liberty have been in agitation they have felt necessity laid upon them, and have spoken as their heart and conscience prompted. But if any man asserts that our pulpits are habitually or even frequently used for these purposes, or that they are ever (we speak of course with the allowance necessary in all such cases for the peculiarities of a few individuals) used for mere party purposes, he is simply propagating a gross slander. Of the Welsh pulpit we do not speak, since we know as little of its practice as does Mr.

R. St. John Corbet, who, speaking with the infallibility and authority of ignorance, launched such wholesale and reckless accusations against its preachers. Those preachers are the leaders of the people, and we hope they will remain so, always the foremost in the van of the army of progress.

Of the power exercised on the opposite side by the clergy there can be no question. Every Liberal candidate, especially for a county division, perfectly understands that they constitute one of the most formidable forces against which he has to contend. If we are to judge, not from sweeping statements, possibly evolved out of the intuitional consciousness of those who make them, but from the reports of individual hearers, from their published sermons forwarded to us, or from the accounts of particular sermons given in the newspapers, the clergy do not unfrequently turn their pulpits into a political engine. Mr. Gladstone had a remarkable experience of this kind in his visit to South Wales. The Vicar of Swansea having got so illustrious a hearer, and the large congregation (including numbers of Nonconformists) attracted in consequence of his presence, improved the opportunity by an eloquent sermon on Disestablishment. We do not blame him. His heart is naturally full of anxiety, and he gave expression to it. The season for his discourse was not happily chosen, and its taste was execrable. But conscience overbears all considerations of taste, good feeling, and expediency, and therefore we do not complain of what many critics would describe as a *bêtise*, would certainly have so described it had a Dissenting minister been the preacher. But we certainly do object to those who act in this fashion, glorifying themselves for their sanctified freedom from all taint of political partisanship, and reproaching us for dishonouring religion by mingling politics with its teaching. If political preaching be an offence, it is at their door, not ours, that it lies.

Lord Salisbury's attack seemed to furnish to a number of discontented and querulous gentlemen the proper opportunity for ventilating their own grievances in the columns of *The Times*. We hold it to be nothing short

of a scandal that writers should be allowed to conceal their identity under the signature of a "Congregationalist," or a "Nonconformist," and then to bring railing accusations against communities with whose inner life they may, as their name suggests, be supposed to have some knowledge. Sir Robert Fowler, who wrote in support of the charges brought by these gentlemen, had the honesty to say, "I speak of Nonconformist services from hearsay," which, we suppose, means that he does not go to Nonconformist chapels except when he is unwisely invited to occupy the pulpit. The one point on which he bases his suspicion—for it can really be nothing more—is that never in the course of his many electoral experiences did he hear an election sermon except once, when, with singular ingratitude, he says, "the inconsiderate young man who preached, though he wished to assist me, was desecrating his sacred office, and I was therefore much troubled at what I was compelled to listen to." Dissenters, on the other hand (he has heard on hearsay), turn the chapel into a political meeting on a Sunday before the election. So established a fact is this that "we have always thought at the Carlton that it was unfortunate to our chances if the poll occurred on a Monday." This is a curious revelation, for the very opposite idea prevails on the Liberal side. Liberals disliked Monday elections under the old law, because they believed that it was the habit of the Tories to employ the beerhouse on the previous Sunday. Possibly this may have been as unfounded a superstition on the part of Liberals as that of their opponents relative to the Dissenting minister. At all events, as Sir Robert Fowler had no contribution to make to the controversy, his intervention said more for his zeal than his judgment.

Whether the "Congregationalist" or the "Nonconformist" or "another Nonconformist" knew any more is open to question. At all events we decline to regard their testimony as of any value until we know from whom it comes. The letters are anonymous, and the writers may be without a name—mere units, who have no special

knowledge as to the feeling of Congregationalists, and no claim to speak with any authority. They may be men with some theory as to the relation of religion and politics, which colours all their views and vitiates all their conclusions. Their own letters certainly do not inspire much confidence in their judgments. One writes thus :

Pulpit politics only tend to the decay of the Church, and, speaking of my own denomination—the Congregationalists—I deplore that, as we have gained in political power, so have we declined in Church life and power. I believe it is directly traceable to this cause, for it is a true though trite saying that politics and religion are the cause of very bitter enmities and separations.

I deeply regret when I hear from time to time of political resolutions being proposed and supported by our pastors at denominational representative meetings. Nonconformists naturally lean towards Liberalism, but there are very many wise and conscientious men among us who hold other and opposite views, and I venture to think that they have a perfect right to hold such opinions without their pastors laying down their own opposing views from the pulpit as if their method of thought could be the only correct one. To attack a man's political views from the pulpit—which protects from any reply being made—is cowardly in the extreme and raises feelings the reverse of those which the pastor is there to expound and teach by example as well as precept.

Who made this gentleman a judge and divider amongst us? He deplores our "decline in Church life and power," thus assuming what needs to be proved, and then attributing the decline he takes for granted to "pulpit politics," which have no existence except in his own imagination, unless, indeed, by that term he means the politics of those who occupy the pulpit. On this point he is very ambiguous, possibly owing to a want of clearness of conception. He objects to political preaching on the well-worn ground that the pulpit is the "coward's" castle, though how it differs in this respect from the editorial chair of *The Times* is not apparent. But he objects equally to "political resolutions being proposed and supported by our pastors at denominational representative meetings." But the platform is not the "coward's" castle. The plain truth seems to be that this gentleman objects to pastors holding

opinions that differ from his own. The most extraordinary feature in his letter, however, is the closing sentence of his first paragraph, in which, having to his own satisfaction traced our spiritual decline to "pulpit politics," he adds, "for it is a true though trite saying that politics and religion are the cause of very bitter enmities and separations." Is the preacher, then, to eschew both of them in his pulpit? This is the only logical conclusion, though perhaps it is one from which this remarkable "Congregationalist" would shrink. If he is really careful as to the spiritual prosperity of our churches he would do well before taking up his pen on such a subject again to pray that he may be guarded against hasty judgments both of men and tendencies. The spiritual life of our churches is too sacred a matter to be handled thus recklessly as a weapon of political warfare. It is affected by an unnumbered variety of influences, some of a general and others of a local or individual character; it is diversified in its forms of manifestation, and it is not easy therefore to find any unerring test by which it can be judged; it is so tender that it may, alas! be all too easily hindered by the harsh words of biting criticism. The men who are so ready to give an unfavourable diagnosis of its present condition are to be met with on all sides. Some of them are well-meaning, good men, but they are often extremely weak; and they could not well give a more striking evidence of weakness than by pronouncing with such dogmatism on a problem so delicate and so many-sided. The correspondent of *The Times* would be greatly astonished if he could have any knowledge of the feelings that are at work in many of the noblest and most devout spirits in our churches. We had an example in a letter which we recently received urging the duty of our insisting upon the value of the religious force in politics, and contending that the signs of political feebleness and incertitude in some quarters indicated a decay of religious earnestness. The writer was right. We need more of Puritan grit. Puritans had no sympathy with the namby-pambyism which some mistake for spirituality, and would have made very short work of its whinings and lamentations.

An extremely amusing letter from another gentleman, who signs himself "A Nonconformist," reveals the animus of many of these complaints :

I have read with much pleasure in your issue of to-day the letter signed "A Congregationalist," believing as I do it correctly represents the opinion of thousands of the members in our Nonconformist churches, who until recently were proud of being known as among the staunchest of Mr. Gladstone's friends, but who now are as far as the poles from him on the Irish question ; and I regret to add our estrangement increases as we daily witness his sympathy with and encouragement to those who are trying their best to make our Parliament a disgrace.

Here is the voice of genuine "Unionism" which we hear on every side—the voice of the numbers of excellent people who, after following Mr. Gladstone so long, have arrived at the conviction that he is either without brain, or conscience, or judgment, or perhaps all combined. It is an extraordinary state of mind, into whose secret we have neither the ability nor the desire to enter. We are bound to respect it, for we suppose it is sincere, but we object to being controlled by it. What puzzles us, however, is the knowledge which these gentlemen possess of the opinions of thousands of Nonconformists. That among these "thousands" should be "Radicals" is as surprising as it is sad. It certainly shows that their Radicalism can hardly have been skin-deep, otherwise they would have respected our liberty of opinion even though they asserted their own. But where is the evidence that these "thousands" are anything more than a regiment of "men in buckram" ? If they were a reality we should probably hear fewer complaints about Dissenting politics. Our real offence, in the eyes of numbers, is not that we are politicians, but that we are not on their side.

We have said this much as to the facts, but there is a question of principle in this matter which deserves more consideration than it has yet received. The attempt to rule politics out of the region of Christian life, that is, practically to say that public life lies outside the kingdom of Christ, and all that Christians have to do in relation to

it is to keep as clear of it as possible, is mischievous from every point of view. It is bad for the world, bad for the Church, disloyal to the Lord Himself. He is Lord of all, of all parts of human life, and all varieties of human activity, as well as of all members of the human family, and we cannot limit His domain without dishonouring Him, and injuring that part of life which we withdraw from His control. It is curious, too, to note how often this aversion to politics is nothing more than hatred of a particular party, and its religion is, in fact, only a kind of sanctified respectability. A friend of ours, a short time ago, met a pietist of this type in a railway carriage. They drifted into a talk about the letter which *The Times* attributed to Mr. Parnell, and this gentleman did not hesitate at once to say that it deserved credence since it was only what might be expected from the Irish leader. He then went on to contend that Mr. Gladstone was not the leader of the Liberal party, but when our friend, as a member of the Liberal Federation, maintained that he was, he at once replied that he could have nothing to say to a Christian who interfered in politics. He seemed blissfully unconscious that he had been talking politics all the time. There is not a little of this cant abroad which needs to be firmly and resolutely met.

It would be nothing short of a calamity were religious influence to be withdrawn from politics, or were it all to be employed on the side of those who would maintain things as they are, in the belief that it is the best—in this best of all possible worlds. If Christianity has nothing to say in relation to those great social problems which are thundering at our doors and clamouring for solution, or if what it says is all on the side of the well-to-do and prosperous, if it has no sympathy with the oppressed and no rebuke for the oppressor, if it catches up the cant of respectable society and is ready even to ape its insolent swagger—alas for Christianity. Our holy religion has suffered enough from the miserable pietism which plumes itself on its separation from the common life of man, and in its cloisters or closets nurses its own Pharisaic fancies. If, in this time of

general awakening, this policy be allowed to dominate the Church, the result can only be disaster. The gospel must prove itself to be the true religion of humanity, or it cannot hold its own against the rivals which base their claims to man's faith by the interest they show in all questions affecting the welfare, both of society and the individual. Positivism could never have gained such power as it has if Christians had been true to their professions, and had conformed their lives to the spirit of their Master. If this is to be changed and the gospel is to secure its rightful hold, it must be done by giving practical proof that in loving and sympathetic service for man we feel that we are rendering the noblest and purest service to God. How can this be, if we say that politics are not in our sphere?

It would, probably, be difficult to convince those who indulge in this cry against politics that those whom they reproach because they misunderstand them are influenced by high religious principle, even in their political activity. Yet what else but a conscientious sense of duty could move them? They have no personal rewards in view—none even which are possible to them. They must, of necessity, expose themselves to much misconstruction, and forfeit many things which they might honourably have desired. Not only will their toil be thankless, but it will often bring bitter criticism, possibly even the desertion of friends. Unless they are sustained by a conviction that they are serving Christ, they are in evil case indeed. It would be much pleasanter to abstain from this rougher work, and devote themselves to a service in which, at all events, they would have the encouraging smile of Christian friends. In the rougher path in which they feel constrained, they have to meet not only the frowns of enemies, but the averted looks even of those in whose service they are making many and serious sacrifices. Still they have no option so long as they feel that they are called to such work. Are such men to be condemned as deficient in spirituality? Or is that to be esteemed the highest Christian life which of principle abjures some of the hardest duties of Christian service? If,

indeed, men lend themselves to mere party intrigue, or in their political work forget what manner of men they ought to be as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, let them bear the censure they deserve. But for those who seek in politics, as in everything else, to do all to the glory of God, whose politics are shaped and controlled by their religion, there is no need of apology or excuse.



GEMS OF AMERICAN SACRED POETRY.*

III.—MY CREED.

I HOLD that Christian grace abounds
Where charity is seen, that when
We climb to heaven 'tis on the rounds
Of love to men.

I hold all else, named piety,
A selfish scheme, a vain pretence ;
Where centre is not—can there be
Circumference ?

This I, moreover, hold, and dare
Affirm where'er my rhyme may go—
Whatever things be sweet or fair,
Love makes them so.

Whether it be the lullabies
That charm to rest the nursling bird,
Or the sweet confidence of sighs
And blushes, made without a word.

Whether the dazzling and the flush
Of softly sumptuous garden bowers,
Or by some cabin door, a bush
Of ragged flowers.

* Under this heading we propose to give brief pieces from American poets, selected from books little known in this country.

'Tis not the wide phylactery,
Nor stubborn fast, nor stated prayers
That makes us saints; we judge the tree
By what it bears.

And when a man can live apart
From works, on theologic trust,
I know the blood about his heart
Is dry as dust.

ALICE CARY.

IV.—THE MOAN OF THE ATTIC.

BY MARGARET J. PRESTON.

HAVE pity upon us, O tender God !
We shrivel and faint; we pine away
Under the glare that fierce and broad,
Beats with its merciless, scorching ray
Into our throbbing brains; that dries
All power to weep from our parching eyes,
And leaves us no breath wherewith to pray—
Ah, pity us, patient God !

Men pity us not; they go their ways,
Fanned by the breezes of sea and shore;
Steeping in mountain shades their days,
Making life wholesome to its core;
While we—we toil in our want and woe,
The tiles above, and the bricks below,
Our children a-gasp on the grimy floor,
Instead of the grassy ways.

We think with a craze, of the years gone by,
Or ever we trod a city street,
How childishly happy we used to be
On the edge of the clover, purple-sweet;
When the heats of the summer noons were strong,
How we sat by the brook as it slid along,
And dabbled our bare and dusty feet,
While the bees went buzzing by:

And it maddens us; for our children moan,
No hope in their eyes; "Could we but see
A field of clover before it's mown,
Or wallow in grass beneath some tree,

And freshen our feet in the clean, wet sand,
And gurgle the water through our hand,
And hear the hum of a bumble-bee,
Or sit on a mossy stone,

"'Twould seem like Heaven!"—and when we tell,
For quieting of their gaunt despair,
How their playmates who've died, have gone to dwell
Mid flowers and fruits and crystal air—
Do you wonder then, as we hear them say,
As they often do, in a frenzied way,
"Dear God!—if He only would take us there!"
Do you wonder our bosoms swell?

Ah, pitying Christ! Thou once wert a child,
And felt the scorplings of Egypt's sun,
And saw how Thy mother's face so mild,
Grew sad with ruth for her holy one—
Be merciful!—move the hearts of men
To care that our children breathe again
The air Thy bounty denies to none—
Thou who wert a human child!

The world is so wide, so green, so broad,
And none of it theirs, close-pent beneath
These crushing roofs. Shall the cool, fresh sod
Be strange to their feet till kindly death
Covers them under it? Must they sigh
In the sweet, pure air until they die,
Tasting it first with Heaven's first breath?
Have pity, O tender God!

—*New York Independent.*

V.—AT DAWN OF DAY.

BY SUSAN COOLIDGE,

THE yellow lighthouse star is quenched
Across the lonely sea;
The mountains rend their misty veils,
The wind of dawn blows free:
The waves beat with a gladder thrill,
Pulsing in lines of spray,
And fast and far chime on the bar—
God bless my Dear to-day!

A thousand leagues may lie between
A world of distance dim;
But speeding with the speeding light
My heart goes forth to him.
Faster than wind or wave it flies,
As love and longing may,
And undenied stands by his side—
God bless my Dear to-day!

God bless him if he wake to smiles,
Or if he wake to sighs;
Temper his will for every fate,
And keep him true and wise;
Be to him all I fain would be,
Who am so far away,
Light, counsel, consolation, cheer—
God bless my Dear to-day!

The gradual light has grown full dim
And streameth far abroad;
The urgency of my voiceless plea
Is gathered up by God;
Take some sweet thing which else were mine,
Truly I dare to pray,
And with it brim his cup of joy—
God bless my Dear to-day!

—*New York Independent.*

OCTOBER CONGRESSES.

OCTOBER has had its usual ecclesiastical assemblies—the Church Congress and the two Congregational Congresses, the Baptist Union at Sheffield, and the Congregational Union at Leeds. A marked difference at once suggests itself between the grand gathering of the Established Church and the less pretentious meetings of the Dissenting communities. The latter had their own work to do, and they did it with earnestness and intelligence, in a catholic spirit and with frank and honest recognition of the noble work which is being done by their friends and brethren in other

churches. They had no exclusive claims to assert, no proselyting work to carry on. They are, indeed, still contending for religious equality in opposition to sectarian ascendancy, but even of this little more than the barest and most indirect reference was heard. In short, they were gathered as assemblies representative of great religious communities, not for the purpose of making men Dissenters or of advancing mere sectarian interests, but of taking counsel as to the best modes of doing their proper work in extending the kingdom of their Lord. It is not to be supposed that any of the "superior persons," of whom Mr. Matthew Arnold is the type will ever take the trouble to read the reports of the proceedings of the two Unions, but if any impartial person will study and examine them, we fancy that he would be considerably surprised to find how far they contradict the ideas current as to the temper of the Establishment and Dissent. It is the Church which is aggressive, exclusive, sectarian. Congregationalists of both sections are content to be regarded as part of the Church of Christ, they do not profess to be the Church. They feel the impossibility of uniformity, they desire only to have the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. They do not talk about making converts from the Anglican Church, nor do they seek in any way to undervalue the noble work that Church is doing. Their battle is against unbelief and sin wherever found.

The tone of the meetings of both the Unions (so far as the Baptist Union, we can judge only from the reports) was remarkable. It was devout, spiritual, practical. Both the chairmen are men not only men of conspicuous ability, but of a deep earnestness, which had a sensible effect on the assemblies over which they presided. Dr. Mackenral surpassed himself in an address of remarkable vigour, singular timeliness, and courageous frankness. He is a distinguished representative of the younger school in theology, and however any one may dissent from some of his views, he must indeed have considerable effrontery who should venture to assert that

they have in the slightest degree chilled his zeal for the salvation of souls, weakened his faith in the "gospel of the glory of the blessed God," or (what after all seems to us the most crucial point of all) compromised his loyalty to Jesus Christ as his Lord. His is not a theology which makes light of sin, or which reduces the value or questions the necessity of the sacrifice upon the cross. The suggestion that men of his type should be treated as dangerous and spoken of as though they were departing from the faith would be ludicrous if it were not something infinitely worse. Yet some of his opinions (as, for example, those in the extract given by Dr. Wilkins in his paper) will appear to men of the Extreme Right as little short of heresy. The Church has been dominated too long by the spirit of this school, and so has had fastened upon it a number of opinions which are supposed to be orthodox, and which can only be disputed at the risk of being regarded as aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. The days of this bondage are over, and the only fear is lest with excess of liberty and the severity of the recoil from the old restraint, some uneasy spirits may deny the faith altogether. There are no truer or better defenders of the faith at such a crisis than those who are able by their own example to show that liberty is perfectly compatible with hearty loyalty and humble obedience to the Master. Philips Brooks' short and comprehensive description of Christians is "those who honestly own for Master Jesus Christ."* This was the gospel as preached alike by Peter and Paul, "God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ," was the keynote struck in the first sermon after the Resurrection on the Day of Pentecost. "We preach Christ Jesus the Lord," is the sum and substance of Paul's preaching. He cannot be essentially wrong who conforms to this model. He may be in error as to some related doctrines, and we may even find it difficult to bring different parts of his creed into harmony with each other or with the central truth, but that belongs not to us; to his own Master he stands or falls, nay, rather, he will assuredly be

* See in illustration an able article in *The Homiletic Review*.

holden up if he is faithful to his Master, for "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." Accusations of constructive heresy are instruments of oppression as objectionable as those of constructive treason. It is quite possible that a man may have certain views which we cannot reconcile with the Evangelical creed, and which possibly may not be logically reconcilable, and yet may be a devout follower of Christ? May it not, in fact, be the worst of heresies to reject one who lives to Christ as his Lord, because he does not accept certain tests of which we find not a trace in the New Testament? We have said this much, not because our honoured chairman needs apology or explanation, nor, indeed, because these remarks have any special application to him, but only because this seems a fitting opportunity for insisting on a general principle. Dr. Mackennal furnishes a conspicuous example of the best features of the present mode of looking at theological questions. Philips Brooks in one of his lectures on Preaching says with great truth, "The hard theology is bad; *the soft theology is worse*. You must count your work unsatisfactory, unless you waken men's brains and stir their consciences. Let them see clearly that you value no feeling that is not the child of truth and the father of duty." We do not know that it would be possible to give a better description of Dr. Mackennal's style of thought and teaching than what is suggested in these words. Robust thinking, suffused by deep and genuine emotion, manly independence, practical sagacity, are his characteristics, and they were exhibited alike in his address and in his whole action as chairman.

The interchange of visits between the representatives of the two Unions was an "outward and visible sign" of the growing unity of two denominations who ought never to have been separated. Dr. Clifford was as cordially welcomed at Leeds as Dr. Mackennal had been at Sheffield. Dr. Clifford's sermon produced a profound impression, and at once raised the meeting of the Congregational Union

Assembly at Leeds to a high level, from which it never descended. The theological paper read by Dr. Wilkins, and the conversation which followed, may, it is hoped, do something to clear the air from the vapours of suspicion with which it has been so heavily charged. Of course there were things said with which we did not ourselves agree, but one of the superstitions relative to the Union and its meetings, of which it is necessary to get rid, is this idea that everybody is to agree with everything that is said or done. This was the burden of a letter which Mr. Newman Hall thought it necessary to write to *The Leeds Mercury*, urging the Union not to pass any political resolution. As there was nothing in the programme pointing in the direction of politics, as there was not a hint of such intention, and as, had there been, no letter would have availed to prevent it from being carried out, this was a work of supererogation on the part of our self-constituted Mentor. We refer to it, however, chiefly because of the ground on which it proceeded. We were told, as we have been told before, that the Union embraces men of different opinions, and that we ought not to offend the minority by passing resolutions contrary to their views. The principle is false and its application would be enfeebling. How is the Congregational Union distinguished from all other bodies that it should insist on unanimity in all its proceedings? To say that political questions are not within its scope is to set aside its entire history and to be false to some of its noblest traditions. But it is not in politics alone that there is a nervous dread of all appearance of diversity. Yet it is certain that diversity exists and must exist unless freedom is to be suppressed. But any theological differences which were revealed did not even approach the central truth of the gospel. The interest which the discussion awakened suggests the wisdom of giving more prominence to such subjects. A day of each autumnal meeting might advantageously be spent in the consideration of Biblical and theological subjects, and would, we believe, be productive of great good. But in order to the success of any such movement, there must be most

absolute freedom—men must not be made offenders for a word, and the expression of difficulties or even of doubt must be met with sympathy and help, not with frowns and anathemas. We shall arrive at a closer and at a fuller acceptance of the truth by liberty than by repression of whatever kind. There were some statements made which we thought unwise and even mischievous. Our duty is to confute them not to sit in judgment upon those by whom they were made.

The prominence given to missionary work was a very marked and gratifying feature in both of the Nonconformist assemblies. In the Baptist Union it was specially conspicuous. The noble missionary sermon of Dr. Maclaren will long be remembered. Few people will share the disappointment expressed by the hyper-critical *British Weekly*, which complains that the sermon was only a brilliant re-setting of common-places which the preacher himself has made familiar, and that he failed to supply any guidance on the question of a probation after death. As to the first it is no valid objection to a discourse addressed to a general congregation. Paul was not ashamed to write the same things. "To me," he says, "it is not irksome; for you it is safe." To present "common-places" in so striking a form as to rivet the attention of the hearers is one of the most difficult, but also one of the most necessary, tasks which the preacher has to discharge. The craving for novelty is one of the weaknesses of the times, and the endeavour to meet it is a besetting danger to young ministers. On the other point, we, in common with numbers, should have been very grateful to Dr. Maclaren if he could have given us a ray of light. But we agree with a remark made by the Rev. Arnold Forster in his speech at the missionary meeting of the Congregational Union, that it is a mistake to allow the argument for missions to rest on, or indeed to be affected by, any theory as to the destiny of the unconverted heathen. We are too prone to think that our reason must be satisfied, on all

these speculative questions, whereas the call of the Master is "Follow Me." The command of the Lord is, "Go ye and preach the gospel to all nations," and it is not for us to question, but simply to obey. A more living sense of Christ's authority is the first condition of missionary earnestness. This being true, it was a happy inspiration which led the Congregational Union Committee to give an evening to the advocacy of Home and Foreign Missions from the same platform. It was a practical exhibition of the unity of the work which is being done by the Church Aid and Home Missionary Society at home, and the London Missionary Society abroad. It is inspired by the same motive, prosecuted with the same kind of instrumentality, controlled by the same Divine rule, consecrated to the glory of the same Lord and Master.

Turning from the Dissenting assemblies to the Church Congress we can hardly fail to be conscious of a change in tone. We recognize heartily the spirit of earnestness which characterized all the meetings. Throughout it was manifest that there is a large body both of the clergy and laity determined that the ground which the Church has lost shall be recovered, if that recovery can be effected by strenuous effort. They seem ready to offer up many an old prejudice and tradition in order to effect this object, and we give them all praise for the courage, the scorn of conventionalism, the readiness to become all things to all men, conspicuous throughout the Congress. Like all new converts these clerical reformers are in danger of running to some excess; but even though this be true we are bound in all fairness to say that there are lessons which we may learn from them, even on points on which we may be supposed to have the advantage. Their working men's meetings are exerting a great influence, and we must emulate the example of the promoters of the Congress in giving increased attention to this kind of gathering. The point is one which may well have the serious attention of the Committee of the Union. It is quite true that we

cannot dazzle the working men and women by a platform of prelates and noblemen; but if we have disadvantages we have advantages also, and should not fail to use them. We do not know why there was not a working men's meeting at Leeds, and very possibly there was some sufficient reason for the omission, but it was to be regretted. Such meetings should be in the programme whenever the meetings are held at a great centre of population, and our best men should be sent to them. In this, as in other respects, the spirit, the energy, and the ingenuity of the managers of the Congress were apparent.

The presence of these very qualities, however, served to bring out, in all the more striking contrast, the faults which stand in the way of the success the leaders of the Church are so anxious to achieve. "Go" counts for a good deal, but it will not do everything. Narrowness, arrogance, priestly assumption may very easily neutralize such beneficial effects as enterprise and pluck might otherwise produce, and all these flaws were conspicuous in the proceedings of the Congress. The Nonconformist ministers of Wolverhampton met it with a kindly welcome, and presented an address which was conceived in a true Christian spirit. For ourselves we look very doubtfully upon this kind of movement, not because we are not desirous of Christian fellowship, but because we do not see how it is possible so long as the Established Church maintains its present attitude and temper towards Nonconformists. A significant illustration of the dominant temper is supplied by a trivial incident which is thus described by *The Guardian*, which occurred during the speech of Mr. Weldon, the headmaster of Harrow.

When he proceeded to refer to our relations to Nonconformists, and mentioned "interchange of pulpits," he was met with loud and angry cries of "No! no!" Stopping quietly, he remarked that he was "not aware that he had expressed any opinion on the subject," and then proceeded clearly and calmly to give his reasons for deprecating the very thing he had been supposed to be about to recommend.

The indignation of the Congress at the bare suggestion that there might be an interchange of pulpits with Nonconformists seems to have exceeded that with which it listened to Canon Taylor's extraordinary assertion as to the power and beneficent influences of Islam. We are not anxious for this interchange—are quite alive to the practical difficulties which stand in its way; but the intense feeling with which the very mention of it was hailed seems but a poor return for the Christian courtesy of the Nonconformists of the town. It is very melancholy that it should be so; but while this spirit is dominant we see no use in keeping up an outward semblance of union. Unreality is a fault which, beyond all others, Christian men should eschew.

Had this only been the feeling of the *οι πολλοι* we might have hoped that the men of light and leading in the Church would have supplied the counteractive; but the deliverances of those in authority were equally offensive, that in which the President introduced the proceedings being the most obnoxious of the whole. Speaking of the possibilities of reunion, the Bishop of Lichfield says—

But our greatest hope lies in the law of spiritual attraction. There is no more certain fact in the recent history of the Church of England than the deepening of its spiritual life and the increase of its spiritual power. Even now that power is making itself felt in the gathering in one by one of many from the ranks of Nonconformity, weary of political discourses and of the strife of tongues. In this power lies our strength and our hope.

And again—

But, in truth, this hostile movement seems already to be losing ground. A large number of Nonconformists will have nothing to do with it. They have no quarrel with the Church; only, they have been brought up in other ways, and they prefer to remain where they are. It is on such as these that the power of spiritual attraction will most surely have its influence. One of the most powerful and popular of Nonconformist preachers has recently been lamenting the decay of spiritual teaching among his brethren. We grieve that it should be so, for their sakes; but it is an evil out of which good may come.

The Bishop of Lichfield is to be congratulated. He has certainly succeeded in crowding into two or three sentences a number of offensive statements to Nonconformists which it would not be very easy to surpass. It is quite unnecessary to meet them. We quote them only to show the impossibility of establishing any relations even of true Christian fellowship between Nonconformists and a church whose leading representatives judge them in this spirit, and shape their action with a view to the extinction of these rival churches. According to the Bishop of Lichfield the great work of the Church is proselytism. While this is so there must be conflict, not only in relation to the political privileges of the Establishment, but in relation to the very principles of church life. There are other points in the Congress which we had intended to notice, but our space is already exhausted.

THE NEW BOSWELL.*

In a recent number of *Macmillan's Magazine* there appeared an interesting and amusing paper under the title of "The Profession of Letters." In that paper the anonymous author addressed himself to a young friend and relative, who was thinking of adopting literature as a career, and recommended him to begin what promised to be the vocation of his life with an essay on Johnson. The advice itself was excellent, as was likewise the reason advanced for proffering it. "There is," said the writer of the article, "Dr. Birkbeck Hill's admirable new edition of the immortal Boswell for you to lay your hands on." The new Boswell does indeed, we may say with perfect confidence, merit to the full all the praise that has been bestowed upon it.

It will be remembered that on a certain occasion, when Doctor Johnson and his biographer were travelling from

* *Boswell's Life of Johnson*. Edited by GEORGE BIRKBECK HILL, D.C.L. In six volumes. 1887. (Oxford : at the Clarendon Press.)

London to Oxford, the doctor was exceedingly dissatisfied with some roast mutton which they had for dinner. "The ladies," says Boswell, "wondered to see the great philosopher, whose wisdom and wit they had been admiring all the way, get into ill-humour from such a cause. He scolded the waiter, saying, 'It is as bad as bad can be; it is ill-fed, ill-killed, ill-kept, and ill-drest.'" Lord Macaulay, like Doctor Johnson, was extremely fond of using vigorous and energetic language, and accordingly we find him applying to Croker's edition of Boswell the famous observation about the leg of mutton. "This edition," he wrote in reviewing the work for the *Edinburgh*, "is ill-compiled, ill-arranged, ill-written, and ill-printed." Now this may or may not be a fair and accurate description of the edition of Mr. Croker, but assuredly no one in his senses would think for a moment of employing language of this kind in connection with the edition of Dr. Birkbeck Hill.

The work which now lies before me consists of six handsome volumes, and is issued by the Clarendon Press, at Oxford. Needless to say, it is beautifully printed, and bound in excellent taste. The first four volumes contain a reprint of Malone's edition of Boswell's "Life," together with the full and exhaustive notes and appendices of the present editor. The fifth volume consists of Boswell's "Tour to the Hebrides," and Johnson's "Notes of his Journey into North Wales;" whilst in the sixth and last volume there will be found, in addition to a most useful list of authorities, a copious index and, under the title of "Dieta philosophi," a Concordance of the wise and witty sayings of Dr. Johnson. So far as I have been able to test it, the index appears to have been compiled with the same diligence and care that characterize the rest of the labours of Dr. Hill. A writer in the *Daily News*, whom, if report speaks correctly, we may identify as Mr. Andrew Lang, does indeed complain that he received no assistance from the index when he sought in vain amongst the notes of Dr. Hill for any reference to the famous controversy between Croker and Macaulay as to the meaning of the mystical letters θ

φ. The reason for this omission, however, is not far to seek. The passage in which these mysterious Greek letters occur will not be found in any portion of Boswell's "Life of Johnson." It is true, no doubt, that Croker gives it in his edition of the "Life"; but then it should be remembered that one of the principal charges brought against Croker was that he had entirely mistaken the limits of an editor's function, and, instead of giving us Boswell's work as it left the hands of its author, had so added to and taken from it as to destroy altogether the artistic unity of the whole, and make it difficult for the reader at any given moment to know what author and what book it was that he was perusing. In the quaint and humorous language of Carlyle :

Where we are, we know ; whither we are going no man knoweth ! It is truly said also, There is much between the cup and the lip ; but here the case is still sadder, for not till after consideration can you ascertain, now when the cup is at the lip, what liquor it is you are imbibing ; whether Boswell's French wine which you began with, or some Piozzi's ginger-beer, or Hawkins' entire, or perhaps some other brewer's penny swipes, or even alegar, which has been surreptitiously substituted instead thereof.

The passage that is now in question is a case in point. The words, "At the altar I commended my θ φ, and again prayed the prayer," are, it is perfectly true, Johnson's own words ; but they are to be found, not in Boswell's "Life," but in a book entitled "Prayers and Meditations composed by Samuel Johnson," which was published by Mr. Strahan, to whom the manuscript had been entrusted, shortly after Johnson's death. It is the genuine and authentic, and not the Crokerised, Boswell that Dr. Hill has undertaken to edit, and consequently he was under no obligation to attempt an explanation of the passage from the "Prayers and Meditations," which has long been, and which is likely to remain, the despair of critics and of editors alike.

How well qualified Dr. Birkbeck Hill was to undertake the task which he has accomplished with so much distinction and so much success, may be seen at a glance from the perusal of the preface which he has prefixed to what is in-

comparably the best edition that has yet appeared of the "Life" of the great Lexicographer. Dr. Hill read his Boswell for the first time when he was still a boy ; but he was then too young for it to make any very deep impression upon him. When he entered Pembroke College, Oxford, though he loved to think that Johnson had been there before him, he cannot call to mind that he ever opened the pages of Boswell. But a happy day came just eighteen years ago when, in an old bookshop, he bought a second-hand copy of an early edition of the "Life," in five well-bound volumes. Of all his books, he tells us, there are none that he prizes more than these, and in looking at them he knows what it is to feel Bishop Percy's "uneasiness at the thoughts of leaving his books in death." For six years these volumes were his constant study and delight, and then at length it was that he ventured to offer himself as editor of a new edition of Boswell's "Life of Johnson." His offer was politely declined ; but his purpose remained fixed and unshakable, and he continued diligently to prepare himself for his formidable undertaking. In 1878 he published a little book entitled, "Dr. Johnson : His Friends and His Critics," in which he reviewed the judgments passed on Johnson and Boswell by Carlyle and Lord Macaulay, and showed that in certain not unimportant particulars those judgments were more or less seriously at fault. In the following year he edited Boswell's "Journal of a Tour to Corsica," as well as the lively and amusing correspondence that passed between Boswell and the Hon. Andrew Erskine, at a time when the former was "towering in the confidence of twenty-one," and at his happiest, being, as Hume so justly described him, very good-humoured, very agreeable, and very mad. Dr. Hill complains, not without reason, that these letters have met with a neglect which they do not deserve. Possibly even now, at the eleventh hour, one of the results of his recent labours may be that they will become more generally known to scholars, if not to the public at large. By reading and by writing, then, Dr. Hill was gradually preparing himself for the *magnum opus* of his life. In 1885 he was ready for

the composers to make a beginning with his work, and now he is able to look back with pride and satisfaction on the fact that the long and arduous task which he set himself has at last been successfully accomplished.

The commentator, like the historian, must above all things be diligent and accurate. "Diligence and accuracy," writes Gibbon, "are the only merits which an historical writer may ascribe to himself; if any merit, indeed, can be assumed from the performance of an indispensable duty." It was said of Croker that he would go a hundred miles through the snow of a December night to search a parish register, to prove a man illegitimate or a woman a year older than she confessed herself to be. Industry such as this cannot but excite our admiration, though it might be wished that it had had a worthier and more charitable object in view. In the case of Boswell himself, we might borrow a phrase of Gibbon's, and say "his inimitable accuracy almost assumes the character of genius." In the advertisement to the first edition of the "Life," Boswell endeavours to convey to our minds some idea of the enormous labour and trouble the composition of his work had cost him. "Were I," he writes, "to detail the books which I have consulted, and the inquiries which I have found it necessary to make by various channels, I should probably be thought ridiculously ostentatious. Let me only observe, as a specimen of my trouble, that I have sometimes been obliged to run half over London in order to fix a date correctly; which, when I had accomplished, I well knew would obtain me no praise, though a failure would have been to my discredit." Boswell was naturally of a curious and inquisitive temperament, but his wits were still further sharpened by contact with his hero, and he himself, in writing to Temple in 1789, says, "Johnson taught me to cross-question in common life." We have the authority of Sir Joshua Reynolds for saying that all who were of Johnson's *school* were distinguished for a love of truth and accuracy; and Boswell tells us that on one occasion, when they had set out to make their famous tour to the Hebrides, the doctor exclaimed: "Sir, I know not any crime so great

that a man could contrive to commit as poisoning the sources of eternal truth." Even Mrs. Thrale did not escape his animadversion at times. "When," writes Boswell, "he and I were one day endeavouring to ascertain, article by article, how one of our friends could possibly spend as much money in his family as he told us he did, she interrupted us by a lively, extravagant sally on the expense of clothing his children, describing it in a very ludicrous and fanciful manner. Johnson looked a little angry, and said: 'Nay, madam, when you are declaiming, declaim; and when you are calculating, calculate.'" Dr. Hill tells us that by diligence and accuracy he has striven to win for himself a place in Johnson's school. It would not be enough if I were merely to say that he has succeeded. He has succeeded to such a degree that he has fairly earned for himself the title of "Johnsonianissimus."

It has been well said that it is not by turning over libraries, but by repeatedly perusing and intently contemplating a few great models, that the mind is disciplined. In the same way we may say that it is not by turning over libraries, but by familiarizing himself with the text of his author, and by studying intently a limited number of books, that a critic best prepares himself to discharge the duties of his office. This Dr. Hill has done, as his numerous quotations of parallel passages abundantly testify. But, while he has made a minute and careful study of the text of the "Life," as well as of a few standard works which throw much light upon various passages in the "Life," he has not neglected to read more widely also, and it is hardly necessary to say that he has been amply rewarded for the trouble he has taken. When Johnson and Boswell were at Nairn, they heard a girl, over the room where they sat, spinning wool with a great wheel, and singing an Erse song. "I'll warrant you," said Dr. Johnson, "one of the songs of Ossian." He then repeated these lines:

"Verse sweetens toil, however rude the sound.
All at her work the village maiden sings;
Nor while she turns the giddy wheel around,
Revolves the sad vicissitude of things."

"I thought I had heard these lines before," writes Boswell. Johnson: "I fancy not, sir; for they are in a detached poem, the name of which I do not remember, written by one Giffard, a parson." The verses were not traced till the present editor came upon the scene. "That I have lighted upon the beautiful lines which Johnson quoted when he saw the Highland girl singing at her wheel, and have found out who was 'one Giffard,' or rather Gifford, 'a parson, is," writes Dr. Hill, "to me a source of just triumph. I have not known many happier hours than the one in which, in the library of the British Museum, my patient investigation was rewarded, and I perused 'Contemplation.'" The lines, then, are to be found in a poem entitled "Contemplation," which was published in 1753. Johnson quoted from memory, and, either consciously or unconsciously, made certain changes in the words. The original form of the verses, though they are quoted differently in the "Dictionary," as well as in the "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides," is as follows:

"Verse softens toil, however rude the sound,
She feels no biting pang the while she sings;
Nor, as she turns the giddy wheel around,
Revolves the sad vicissitude of things."

On other difficult and knotty points Dr. Hill's wide reading has enabled him to throw considerable light. Dr. Johnson was in the habit of writing down his prayers and meditations, and one of his prayers, in view of becoming a politician, is entitled, "Engaging in Politicks with H——n." H——n is, no doubt, the Right Honourable William Gerard Hamilton—"single-speech Hamilton," as he was commonly called—but Boswell confesses that he did not know in what particular department of politics Johnson intended to engage, nor was Mr. Hamilton able to explain. Dr. Hill informs us in the first place that, in a little volume entitled "Parliamentary Logick," by the Right Hon. W. G. Hamilton, published in 1808, twelve years after the author's death, there was included, "Considerations on Corn," by Dr. Johnson. This tract, says Hamilton's editor, was

written in November, 1766, and he further tells us in his preface that "Johnson had entered into some engagement with Mr. Hamilton occasionally to furnish him with his sentiments on the great topics that should be considered in Parliament." In the second place, Dr. Hill reminds us that in the spring of 1768 Burke had broken with Hamilton, in whose service he had been. It would seem then to be highly probable that Hamilton, in consequence of having lost the services of Burke, who had been a companion in his studies, sought Johnson's aid. Johnson had all the knowledge that Hamilton required, except that of law, and it is this very study that we find him at this very time entering upon—all which would seem to show that for some time, and to some extent, an engagement was formed between Johnson and Hamilton. Another passage on which Dr. Hill is able to throw a bright and clear light is the following, which occurs in the "Life" under the paragraphs relating to May, 1783. "A gentleman talked of retiring. 'Never think of that,' said Johnson. The gentleman urged, 'I should then do no ill.' Johnson: 'Nor no good either, sir; it would be a civil suicide.'" Dr. Hill believes that Burke was the gentleman who "talked of retiring," and, in support of this view, he informs us that on May 19 and 21 Burke had defended his action in restoring to office two clerks, Powell and Bembridge, who had been dismissed by his predecessor, and he had justified his reforms in the paymaster's office. "He awaited," he said, "the judgment of the House. . . . If they so far differed in sentiment, he had only to say 'Nunc dimittis servum tuum.'"

But it is needless to multiply examples of the patient research and ripe scholarship of the editor of the "New Boswell." Suffice it to say that he has earned for himself a place in the band of successful labourers "in the great and shining fields of English literature," by the production of what is beyond all question the worthiest edition that has yet appeared of "writings, which," in the words of Lord Macaulay, "are likely to be read as long as the English exists, either as a living or as a dead language."

The readers of the "New Boswell" will be glad to learn that Dr. Hill has no intention of abandoning for a moment the labours in which he is engaged. He already sees before him to his third book. He has now on hand a "Selection of the Wit and Wisdom of Dr. Johnson." He purposes to collect and edit all Johnson's letters that are not in the "Life," and, when the letters have been published, he intends to devote himself to the heavier and more arduous task of editing "The Lives of the Poets." I am sure that all lovers of English literature will wish him God-speed in the labours that still lie before him, though it may well be doubted whether it is possible for him to lay us under greater obligations than those under which we already lie to him for this truly admirable and scholarlike edition of Boswell's immortal "Life."

WILLIAM SUMMERS.

DR. MORLEY PUNSHON.*

WE have often wondered why we have not had a biography of a man so eminent in his own walk as William Morley Punshon long before this. It is true that the life of a popular preacher and lecturer seldom abounds in startling incident, but the position which Dr. Punshon held in his own denomination, the widespread popularity which he enjoyed, and the varied character of his active ministry, all suggested that his biography must have in it points of instruction and interest. The delay, however, has not been in vain if it has been necessary to secure for us so admirable a piece of work as that which Mr. Macdonald has now prepared. It is distinctively a life of the man—not a mere picture of the Methodism of which he was so brilliant an ornament, nor a story of the movements in which he took so conspicuous a part, but a lifelike picture of

* *The Life of William Morley Punshon, LL.D.* By FREDERICK W. MACDONALD. (Hodder & Stoughton.)

the man as he was, and of the work which he did. There are points on which we might have wished for more detail, but the probability is that the material out of which it might have been supplied was lacking. Dr. Punshon kept a journal, of which extensive use has been made, which, in fact, supplies some of the most interesting portions of the volume, but it was evidently impossible that a man of such multifarious duties could have kept that minute record of his work and the men with whom it brought him into association which is always so attractive to the reader. The volume would certainly have been greatly enriched had there been more personal reminiscences of this kind, but the admirable judgment and taste shown by Mr. Macdonald, assure us that he has omitted nothing that ought to have been preserved. So also some might have expected a fuller account of the inner life of Methodism itself, and especially of that internal agitation by which it was disturbed in the earlier part of Dr. Punshon's ministry. Instead of such records, however, we have what certainly is of more importance, a faithful portraiture of the man himself, by one who knew him well, and was capable of appreciating his high qualities. Mr. Macdonald's friendship with Dr. Punshon must have made the work, which he has so successfully accomplished, a labour of love. To set forth the beautiful Christian character of one whom he both loved and honoured, to show how in him a child-like simplicity was blended with a manly strength and robustness, to pay a well-merited tribute to his remarkable gifts, and at the same time to indicate how they were all sanctified by a spirit of true consecration, must have been to him a congenial task. As to the manner in which he has executed it there can be only one opinion. Alike in the discriminating use of his material and in the skill with which he has wrought them into his narrative, Mr. Macdonald has proved himself a master in his craft. He has, in fact, produced a charming biography of a man who himself had a rare charm both in spirit and manner. Our personal acquaintance with the subject may probably make it more attractive to us, but the book

is one which must be interesting and ought to be instructive to numbers outside the circle of his friends, even outside the wide circle of Methodism itself.

The acquaintance of the writer of this notice with Dr. Punshon dates back to a very early period in his career. We were both young ministers together at Newcastle, and in the retrospect, the one cause of regret on the part of the present writer is that he did not seek to cultivate a closer acquaintance with the eloquent young preacher, who had suddenly leaped into popularity, and was already giving abundant promise of the eminence which he subsequently attained. But the circumstances were against this kind of friendship. Congregationalists and Methodists at that time (thirty-five years ago) did not understand each other so well as it may be hoped they do now, and during the period of Mr. Punshon's ministry in Newcastle the relations between them was specially strained. It was the time of the great controversy in which Everett, Dunn, and Griffiths were the leaders, and Congregationalists, as was perhaps to be expected from them, sympathized with a party who seemed to be contending for freedom. The three leaders were all well-known in the district, and Griffiths, who was in the neighbourhood at the time, had awakened a kindly feeling among Congregationalists by the advocacy of liberal principles which found but little favour among the Wesleyan ministers of that generation. Hence, Congregationalists showed a sympathy with the Reformers, as they were called, which was more generous than wise. It did not take any very active form, but it was quite understood, and, of course, acted as a barrier to any close intercourse between the ministers of the two denominations. Mr. Punshon was always credited with a more liberal spirit than his seniors; but, as the references in the volume prove, he had his troubles with the dissentients, and not the faintest sympathy with their mode of proceeding. Indeed, with his keen attachment to Methodism, he was not likely to regard with much friendliness those who, in his view, were meddling with a quarrel which did not concern them, and meddling to

the injury of that which he loved. He was quite right in that view. We did not understand the merits of the controversy, and should have maintained an absolute neutrality. Allowance may be made for the feelings which young and independent spirits, with an unfaltering faith in liberty, cherished toward great organizations, but the experience of that time taught a lesson which ought not to be forgotten. The less outsiders have to do with domestic differences the better for all parties.

The mistake of that time concerns us here so far only as it prevented that fuller knowledge of one with spirit so congenial as that of Mr. Punshon, but there are pleasant recollections of the time. Especially have we a vivid remembrance of the remarkable effects produced by the young preacher wherever he went. The impetuous roll of the eloquence with which he used to carry away great assemblies was quite as remarkable then as in the after years; and when it is remembered that to the brilliancy of his rhetoric, the singular felicity of his illustrations, the beauty of his poetic quotations, always recited with singular power, and, above all, the passionate force of his intense earnestness was added all the charm of youthful presence, it is not surprising that he took his audiences by storm. He was a favourite in every circle and on every platform. For ourselves, though we knew comparatively little of him, we had conceived for him a feeling much stronger than that of mere admiration, and this was more than confirmed in subsequent years. He was, in truth, a godly man, and one whose personal religion never seemed to have suffered under the influences of a popularity, which would have been enough to turn the head of many a man. To the last he was gentle, kindly, sympathetic, and sincerely devout. The book represents him as a remarkably affectionate man, and that was the impression which he always made upon us. In him all the noblest elements of Methodism were fully developed. He had great catholicity of spirit, but it did not at all interfere with that hearty devotion to his own Church which was one of his finest

characteristics. It is men of his type, men who are loyal to their own Church, but whose loyalty never degenerates into narrowness, nor hardens into bigotry, who are the best fitted to help on the cause of Christian unity. It is little short of a calamity that it is men of an altogether different stamp, men lacking in strength of conviction and intensity of denominational attachment who would produce in others the same laxity which they cultivate themselves, who are regarded as the promoters of that fellowship in which all followers of Christ should have a part. Such men have, in fact, a sectarianism of their own, which is alike unable and unwilling to appreciate others who, maintaining their fidelity to conscience, even in the smallest matters, have a breadth of sympathy which includes within its range all who are seeking to serve the one Master.

Dr. Punshon had none of the indifference to denominational principle which such men regard as the highest manifestation of charity, but he had the far truer and wider charity of one whose loyalty to his own conscience has taught him to respect the consciences of others. The fervour of his Methodism was certainly not due to the fact that he had no experience of the difficulties of the system. To outsiders it may sometimes seem as though one who had obtained so enviable a position in a powerful organization must have been almost exempt from the troubles and vexations which beset the majority of men. But of these Dr. Punshon had his full share. No man served Methodism more nobly, yet even his services were often regarded with jealousy and distrust. Take, for example, his noble proposition to raise £10,000 for building chapels at sea-side places. A more self-denying offer there could hardly have been. It meant the employment of that extraordinary power of lecturing with which he was endowed for the benefit of the denomination. It meant years of anxiety and toil for himself, but as the result a wonderful gain to Methodism. Here is an account of the way in which it was received :

His proposal was brought before the Conference by the Rev. John

Scott, an ex-President of great experience and sagacity. He read a letter from Mr. Punshon urging the creation of a special fund, and proposing, with the permission of the Conference, to devote a portion of his time to the raising of a sum of money, say £10,000, during the next five years. Mr. Scott moved that the offer be accepted, and permission given. The resolution was seconded by the Rev. F. A. West, another ex-President, who urged that Mr. Punshon's talents and influence were a gift from the Head of the Church which ought to be employed for the extension of the work committed to Methodism. He knew the objections sometimes not unfairly brought against public lectures, but contended that they did not apply in Mr. Punshon's case. The Rev. Charles Haydon hoped that they would stop short of killing Mr. Punshon by the burdens they laid upon him. Dr. Rigg thought it would have been better if Mr. Punshon's offer had been made on behalf of the Theological Institution Fund, which stood in need of some such help. Dr. Waddy said they had no right to tell Mr. Punshon what offer he ought to have made, and thought they should accept the one he had made. The Rev. S. R. Hall feared that Mr. Punshon's proposal would bring him into collision with the Superintendents of the circuits. The Rev. Wm. Arthur thanked Mr. Punshon for his generous offer, and would accept it. He thought that the example of one man doing one great thing in his own way would be a seed bearing fruit after its kind, and would set other men doing other great things. Dr. Osborn admired Mr. Punshon's spirit, but doubted whether the case required a special fund. He feared also that other funds would suffer, that the strain on Mr. Punshon would prove too great, and had his doubts, moreover, as to the value of lecturing in the long run. Mr. Punshon said in reply, that he was aware of the abuses to which lecturing was liable. For himself he always endeavoured in his lectures to preach Christ, and he was prepared to defend the lecture as a means of usefulness. Rightly used it brought under good influences numbers of persons whom they could not otherwise reach (pp. 197-9).

We must send our readers to the book for a fuller account of a life the energies of which were prematurely exhausted by the excess of toil which Mr. Punshon imposed upon himself. We are carried on from page to page by the fascination which is not only in the narrative, but which is in the man. There is so much of reality, thoroughness, and tenderness in him at every point that we are drawn to him. We admire his genius, we sympathize with his lofty aims and noble aspirations, we rejoice in his popular successes, and are interested in the story of them; but most of all do we honour the Christian, who in the midst

of all by the grace of God kept himself to so large an extent unspotted from the world. There is a singular pathos about the story which gives it all the more charm. Prosperous as the life looked from the outside, and bright and successful as it really was, there was a very large element of sadness in the active, stirring, and even exciting life. His path was dogged by sorrow, keenly felt by so affectionate a heart. His very successes had their own trouble. Take the following :

Mr. Punshon's appointment to the Islington Circuit terminated at the Conference of 1864, and the latter part of it was spent in the busy routine that was now so well established. As Superintendent he was more occupied in administration than heretofore, and his duties as Financial Secretary of the district brought him up, at certain seasons of the year, great additions of work. Pressed by the requirements of his "Fund," he lectured more than ever, and, with the exception of one or two enforced rests, did not relax for months together the strain of physical and nervous toil. He was now in the prime of life, and undoubtedly possessed great strength, but he was drawing upon it too lavishly. The life-long tendency to depression was strengthened by the exhausting reaction which from time to time followed his efforts, and brought him into morbid conditions of mind and body. Family affairs caused him much anxiety, and certain characteristics of his own inner life prevented his "being exalted above measure." Seldom has a man of such abounding popularity been more effectually weighted by burdens of which the world knew nothing (pp. 217-18).

One of the saddest facts of the whole is the story of the trouble inflicted on this noble-minded and large-hearted man by the cruel legislation of which High Churchism is the instigation. It was Dr. Punshon's misfortune to lose the wife of his youth at an early period in his life. Her sister undertook to be a mother to the bereaved children, and nobly did she sustain the part for years. But, as Dr. Punshon says in that Journal whose records are often so touching in their pathos, "Strange and grave perplexities have arisen around me, and I am longing to know my duty." Is it too much to say that gossip would not suffer him to go on in the path he had marked out for himself? The result is thus told :

The "strange and grave perplexities" of which I spoke in a former entry, deepened and complicated. My searchings of heart grew

intenser, until clear and full my duty rose before me, and I have been strengthened to do it. At the Conference of 1867 I was designated representative to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, and President of the Canadian and Eastern British American Conferences. I had previously announced to the President, and to a large and influential committee (composed of all the ex-Presidents, the Revs. J. Bedford, President, E. Hoole, W. B. Boyce, L. H. Wiseman, Rigg, Vasey, S. R. Hall, G. Smith, C. Haydon, McOwan, and J. H. James), that after much and prayerful consideration of the subject, I deemed it my duty to marry Fanny Vickers, who has for nine years been mother to my children, the only mother indeed whom two have ever known. I detailed fully my motives and reasons to Mr. Arthur, in a letter which he comforted me by saying, "was worthy of me, and of the grace of God in me." In the fulfilment of this duty, I had to make great sacrifices, to consent to be misjudged, to grieve some whom I loved, to lay my account with a publicity given to my private affairs which is to me the heaviest cross of the kind that I could be called to bear, to lose a position which had become assured by years of service, to trample upon love of country (with me a passion), to break up old friendships, to bear the imputation of motives which my soul scorns, and to bear it without answer, to found a home in a new world, and above all, to imperil my usefulness. Yet my convictions of duty have never wavered. I was married to dear Fanny on the 15th of August, by Rev. Egerton Ryerson, D.D., Dr. Anson Green and Dr. Lachlin Taylor being my sureties. I am happy in my wife's love, and in my own strong assurance that I have done right. The Lord my God, whose guidance I have invoked, has not suffered me to be haunted by the shadow of a misgiving on this point. I cannot see the future. I am living from day to day" (p. 282).

Comment on this is unnecessary. Is it too much to think that Dr. Punshon's noble life was undoubtedly shortened by the miserable piece of ecclesiasticism which placed him in a position so trying? His ministry in Canada, like his ministry in this country, was wonderfully popular and signally blessed, and after he returned to the home he loved so well he had some years of noble and honoured service. Beloved by a large circle of friends, wielding great influence in the councils of Methodism, in which he seems to have represented what (to borrow a name from political parties) may be described as the Left Centre, enjoying an undiminished popularity, there was, nevertheless, an air of gravity approaching to sadness about him in this closing period of his life which impressed

us whenever we met him. The story explains it all. Through much tribulation he entered into the kingdom. His was a hard fight, but right nobly and bravely was it fought. The secret of his power and victory was his child-like faith, the evidence of which is found in every page of this fascinating biography.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES is an earnest, brave, and devoted man, full of enthusiasm, and intent on serving God and his generation to the utmost of his power. Whether his plans are all wise and expedient—by expediency meaning only their adaptation to the ends he contemplates—we are not prepared to pronounce until we see them more fully developed. We are told that they are taken partly from the Salvation Army and partly from the Roman Catholics. That is no objection in itself, although, in relation to the latter, it may be observed that institutions, which ultimately assumed an evil character, were in their inception as innocent and even praiseworthy as those which Mr. Price Hughes and his friends propose to establish. It may be said in reply that, as experience has shown where the danger lies, so it has also taught how it may be guarded against. For ourselves, we honestly say we are not prepossessed by the idea of these sisterhoods, and shall watch their development with some anxiety, albeit fully conscious that their early days will not afford a correct test of their character, for it is not all at once that any evil tendencies will be developed. For the present it is certain that Mr. Hughes will introduce into the work of his mission an invaluable kind of agency, and if he can show that it can be so directed and regulated as to remove the possibly exaggerated apprehensions of Protestants like ourselves, who may possibly be regarded as Philistines in the matter, he will do a great service to the cause of Christ. He is making a great experiment on this point, for in reality he is en-

deavouring to show that we may borrow much from Rome, provided only that in the teaching there be a faithful adherence to the gospel of Christ. We heartily wish him success, although we are not able to silence all our own doubts and misgivings. They are certainly not allayed by the frequent references to the music hall, and the comparison between its brightness and life and the dulness of what are called in the *The Pall Mall Gazette* "humdrum" religious services. Mr. Hughes, however, must not be held accountable for the expressions used by the journalist who certainly is not the most discreet of friends, and who, we hope, does not fairly represent the spirit of the movement. We quite agree that our Lord's lesson, that the children of this world are *for their own generation* wiser than the children of light, is full of suggestion for us, both as to the spirit and method of Christian work, but we must be careful to interpret it wisely. Christians, and the children of the world, belong to two generations, and the methods adapted for the work of the one may be quite unsuitable for the other. It is enterprise and ingenuity which fill music halls, and the same qualities should be shown in the service of Christ, but the modes of action may be wholly different. But criticism is at best but a poor affair. We may not see the value of Mr. Price Hughes' methods, but we greatly honour his spirit. His conception of the true function of Christianity in the world, his rebellion against mere conventionalism and routine, his deep sympathy with humanity, his greatly-daring faith, all command our admiration. In our heart of hearts we wish him success, and if we cannot adopt all his plans, pray that we have more of his spirit, and so emulate his service for Christ. One quality, at all events, belongs to this movement. Upon it there is no taint of sectarianism. It is a Methodist mission for the promotion of our common Christianity, and its success will be a distinct gain to the universal Church. Mr. Hughes may be assured that he has as hearty well-wishes among Congregational Dissenters as in his own communion

It seems as though October, 1887, would long be remembered in the history of the party of progress as marking a great revival in its fortunes. The meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Nottingham was one of those striking events which are intuitively seen to have a distinct historic significance. Mr. Gladstone's manifestation of power was felt to be phenomenal. A strange revelation it must have been to the men who two years ago were going about whispering that his day was past, and that the sooner he was driven into retirement at Hawarden the better for the party and the country. He is now on the verge of 78—that is, he has two more years of anxiety and care on his record—and yet there is not a politician of the day who has so much of the elasticity and buoyancy of youth. The vigour of his thinking, the forceful character of his eloquence, the power of physical endurance, are very remarkable in so aged a man. His speeches at Nottingham and Derby would have exhausted many a man who is in the fulness of his powers, but Mr. Gladstone managed to interpolate an address to the students of the Nottingham Institute, into the other work of that busy and active time. When we saw that he had been asked to visit the College, and had complied with the very unreasonable request, we were half disposed to be angry with those who had asked him, but as we read the wise and valuable words which he addressed to the students that feeling vanished, and we thanked God that there was one wielding so mighty an influence on the political thought of the age, who is so loyal a servant of God. His remarks on the conflict between faith and unbelief, especially those as to the spirit which we should show to sceptics, were singularly wise, and should be carefully noted by those who look at such subjects solely from the ecclesiastical or clerical point of view. It is so rarely indeed that great statesmen are vitally interested in the greatest of all controversies, that we may be devoutly thankful, not only that such a force has entered into our public affairs, but even more that a voice so wise and influential, should speak to theologians from the very

midst of that world which, for the most part, regards them and their work with contempt, if not with a more bitter feeling. A statesman turning aside from his own special work for such a purpose, and that at the very crisis of a great struggle, was a spectacle to note and remember. But much as we honour Mr. Gladstone's goodness, and greatly as we admire his versatility, his boundless resource, his matchless eloquence, most of all are we surprised at the extraordinary hopefulness of his character. Talking with ourselves a short time ago, he said: "I thank God every day of my life for the number of brave men and noble women in the world." It was wonderful to hear such a sentiment from one who has had so much to endure from the malignity of men, but it was a revelation of his true self, and it supplied a key to the secret of his power. He is a man of faith. He has faith in men because of his faith in God and the right. Hence he is firm where others would falter, and is ready to press on where others would hesitate. His critics pronounce him weakly credulous and sanguine in respect to the Irish, but time only can show whether he has not judged them more truly than those who attribute to them a double measure of original sin. Our deep conviction is that he is right, and that the response the Irish have already made to his measures is the best proof of it that could be given. But, at all events, it is the only policy which gives the faintest hope of a true union between the two peoples. If Ireland is so bad that it must for ever be held in with bit and bridle, then the only relation between her and England is that of the wild beast and its keeper, with the possibility that at some heedless moment the beast may avail itself of an opportunity to slip from its chain and wreak destruction on its keeper.

But though Mr. Gladstone was the prominent figure of the extraordinary demonstrations at Nottingham, the significance of those demonstrations themselves cannot be over-rated. They would not have been possible twelve months ago, or even six months ago. It is not yet six months since the St. Austell election, when the fortunes of

the party seemed at their nadir. The seat was held after strenuous exertions by a majority so diminished as to show the strength of Liberal Unionism in one of the most Radical districts of the country. Even then things were not so bad as they looked, or as the timid of our own friends represented them. Still, there were few evidences of recovery from the disastrous defeat of last year. In our secret heart we believed the tide was turning, and that the change was greater than was perceived, because it was mainly in the ranks that it was going on, while the local leaders for the most part held their old position. One advantage resulting from the Nottingham demonstration is that the people have had an opportunity of showing their true sentiment. Whether any serious impression has been made on the malcontents of higher social status is as yet uncertain. The deliberate withdrawal of Mr. Buchanan from the party and the return of Mr. Alderman Goldschmid (a Nottingham Unionist leader) to his allegiance are gratifying signs, but it would be unwise to attach too much importance to them. One thing is certain, the party is so far reunited that it is idle to talk about any further attempts at conciliation. The leaders may still hold out, but they have no party behind them; and much as we regret the loss of some of them, we cannot admit that their secession can affect our position. There is one Liberal party, and Mr. Gladstone is its leader. We have no desire to rule dissentients out, but how it is possible to rule them in so long as they are doing their utmost to defeat the measures on which the party is determined it is not possible to see.

It is subject for congratulation that the Conference did not confine its attention to Ireland, and that Mr. Gladstone in his speech travelled into the wide, and of late neglected, field of English politics. To us, of course, it is eminently satisfactory that Disestablishment has at last found a place in the Liberal programme. It is true that at present the question is to be raised only for Wales and Scot-

land, but the principle will be discussed in its widest bearings, and we have no doubt as to the result. There is no subject on which there is a more general agreement among the Liberal party. Opinion has been ripening to an extent little suspected by all except those who have carefully noted the signs of the times. The bishops evidently recognize the growth of the adverse sentiment, and are nerving themselves to meet it as best they can. Such utterances as that of the Bishop of Lichfield, who told the Congress that while they might submit to the supremacy of the Crown, they would not bow to the supremacy of Parliament, will only hasten the inevitable day. We wonder where this prelate has learned his constitutional law. The doctrine which underlies his remarkable statement is practically that which brought Charles I. to the scaffold, and sent his son into exile. We thought that it had been settled long ago that the power of the Crown was the power of Parliament. What the bishop meant is sufficiently clear. He frets against the idea of the Church being ruled by a democracy which has already given Mr. Bradlaugh a seat in Parliament, and may some day give an equally objectionable person a place in the Cabinet. We should have thought that a Church which submits to have its clergy appointed by a Duke of Marlborough, a Marquis of Ailesbury, or an Earl of Lonsdale, could hardly have any greater indignity to suffer. Still, if the control of Parliament be so regarded, there is one way by which it may be escaped, and one only. That way is Dis-establishment, and now that the Liberal party has resolved to undertake to settle the question it will be done. All true friends of religion may rejoice in the prospect. The Anglican Church instead of suffering will be the greatest gainer by the change.

If the "Unionists" are satisfied with the results of Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Ulster—to put it more correctly, we should say the Orange corner of Ulster—they must have

the virtue of contentment to an extent beyond that of ordinary mortals. Of course there were great crowds to welcome the champion of the Union—that is, of the ascendancy which these Orangemen suppose to be their inheritance by Divine right. But that proves no more, hardly proves as much, as the extraordinary midnight gathering at Woodford. We all knew before that there was such an intense *furor* among a section of the Ulster people against Mr. Gladstone's proposals, that there is nothing novel or surprising in the enthusiasm with which Mr. Chamberlain was welcomed. Whether they would be equally fervid in their attachment to the Union were the position of the two parties in Ireland reversed is another question, on which we only say in passing that the spirit displayed at the meetings was as lawless as that attributed to the Nationalists. It was not indistinctly intimated that they would not submit to the law if a Home Rule measure was passed, and Mr. Chamberlain's argument might be quoted in support of such a position. For the present, however, they are defenders of the English connection, because that connection tells in their favour. But it was not necessary for Mr. Chamberlain to go to Belfast and listen to the ringing cheers of Orangemen in order to demonstrate this. And now that the crowds have dispersed, and the echoes of the shouting have died away, what is the practical outcome of the whole? Mr. Chamberlain has made some speeches, the skill and ability of which makes us regret that such power should be employed in favour of a party whose true character few men have more clearly exposed, or more vigorously denounced. He has separated himself further than ever from his old friends and associates, but even in doing it has betrayed by an undertone in his speeches, of which he may be hardly conscious himself, how uneasy he feels in his new relations. He has once more betrayed that strong animus against Mr. Gladstone, which is so unworthy an element in political life, and the intensity of which will be the ruin, as it is already the discredit, of the Unionist cause. A party whose impulse is hatred to a man, and that man the greatest

statesman of his age, is in evil case indeed. As to Mr. Chamberlain's demand that Mr. Gladstone should produce some new scheme, it could only have been answered in Mr. Gladstone's own inimitable style. If there had been a sincere desire for a reconciliation it could have been effected long since, nay, it might be effected even now. That would be possible, however, only if the difference were one of detail. But every day makes it clearer that there is a radical difference of principle, and that being so, it will be fought out to the bitter end. What is extraordinary in such a case is, that Mr. Chamberlain, of all our leading statesmen, should be the favourite hero of Ulster Orangemen. No doubt Liberals of the type of Mr. T. W. Russell were the promoters of the demonstration, but it would have been a poor affair but for the Orangemen who gave it its numerical importance, and infused into it its passionate spirit. Mr. Chamberlain, as the idol of the narrowest and most intolerant section of Tories in the United Kingdom, is a spectacle which moves only to sadness or to ridicule.

We write thus of Mr. Chamberlain with sincere regret, and even when doing so, we wish to separate ourselves from those who apparently find a pleasure in heaping upon him all kinds of opprobrium and insult. The quarrels of friends are proverbially bitter, and it has certainly been so in this case. Of the leaders on both sides, Mr. Gladstone and Lord Hartington are the only two who have kept wholly free from personal bitterness. Mr. Chamberlain has been assailed with a persistent ferocity, which has often created a reaction in his favour. He has, no doubt, given considerable provocation, but we do not remember that he has ever imputed personal motives, and he has certainly never indulged in the fierce invective which Mr. Bright has directed against the ally and friend of nearly thirty years. Still, he has often been irritating, and Mr. Jesse Collings and Mr. W. S. Caine, who (perhaps unfairly) have been regarded as speaking his sentiments, have been

still more so. We have, however, maintained all through that the violent attacks upon him, impugning his motives and questioning his sincerity, have been unfair and unpolitic. We differ from him *toto celo*, but that is no reason why we should do him injustice, either to his motives or his abilities. That does not prevent us from saying that we hold the position he has taken in relation to Ulster, and indeed the position into which he has drifted on the Union question generally, as inconsistent with true Liberal principles. But he is not the only man professing to be a Liberal who will not apply to Ireland the principles which he maintains in relation to England. Suppose some division of Essex, in which landlordism is specially strong, should refuse to submit to the rule of Boards constituted under the Local Government Act which we are promised, on the plea that they would not have their affairs managed by the nominees of peasants, would Mr. Chamberlain in that case insist on the rights of the minority? Unfortunately, it is so difficult for Englishmen to put themselves in the place of Irishmen, that those who are faithful to Liberal principles and traditions in England, lose sight of them when they cross the water. It is for those who feel differently to be tolerant and patient, and the more these qualities are cultivated the sooner shall we reach a settlement of the Irish problem.

A belief in Lord Hartington is a superstition of which many well-meaning Liberals find it hard to get rid, but surely his speech at Nottingham must go far to disillusion them. Hitherto, as has been said above, his Lordship has been honourably distinguished from his Unionist colleagues by the adoption of a tone in speaking of Mr. Gladstone more worthy, not only of the greatness of his former chief, but also of his own past relations to him. Probably he would not even now go so far as Mr. Bright, who had the coolness to suggest in his letter that probably Mr. Gladstone would not say anything definite or worth answering—a

remark which in another man we should call insolence, but which in the case of Mr. Bright we prefer not to characterize. Lord Hartington's elaborate but futile attempt to meet the case put by Mr. Gladstone shows that he at all events knew that Mr. Gladstone had given him a good deal to answer. Unfortunately before dealing with it he thought it necessary to indulge in a preliminary attack upon Mr. Gladstone himself. There could be hardly a better testimony of the impression produced than by his triumphal procession to Nottingham and his extraordinary reception there. The evidences of this indeed are everywhere, not least in the extraordinary rejoicing over the fact that Lord Hartington had had such an audience at Nottingham. Even the most sanguine Liberal did not suppose things were come to such a pass that there could ever have been a question on that point. Not only must the Unionist party be annihilated, but English love of a stand-up fight, and English interest in a leading politician also the heir of the greatest dukedom in the kingdom have died out before Lord Hartington could have been left without a large body of sympathizing hearers. Yet *The Times* must have thought this possible or it could not have been so thankful for so little. Not the less, Liberal Unionism is in difficulties. Lord Hartington's railings against one-man despotism are enough to prove it. They simply mean that his Lordship himself, Mr. Bright, Mr. Chamberlain, the Whig Dukes in general, Sir Henry James, Mr. Goschen, to say nothing of the Tyndalls, Leekys, and Goldwin Smiths, have all done their worst against him, and that they have only strengthened instead of weakened his influence. All this talk about his tyranny is very childish. What is worse, it is false; those who have worked with him know that it is false. Such outbursts of jealousy will help no cause.

MR. SPURGEON'S "DOWN-GRADE"—OPINIONS OF CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS.*

REV. A. M. FAIRBAIRN, D.D.,

Principal of Mansfield College, Cambridge.

I CONFESS it goes with me against the grain to notice anything so gratuitous and ungenerous as these attacks. Personal testimony will always be discredited by those who have made it their special interest to assail us. They have begun without even rudimentary knowledge, and the last thing they want is to have their own view disproved. Most of our critics know nothing of the merest outer matters of fact connected with our men, yet they undertake to sit in judgment on their inmost convictions.

But as you ask I will bear what testimony I can, according to the truth as it is given in my experience. Well, then, I believe that our ministers as a whole are more evangelical than the men of the previous generation, *i.e.*, they hold and preach a larger, richer, fuller, freer gospel. They are loyal to Christ, love Him, serve Him, preach Him, and seek to persuade all men to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings and death. I would say that our younger men believe in the Godhood of Christ in a more living way than our fathers did; that they believe more strenuously in the universality of the gospel—not simply for all men, but for the whole man and the whole of life. Their salvation is a completer salvation—may emphasize the legal less, but it emphasizes the moral more; they may speak less of justification, but more of sanctification; less of sinners saved from the wrath of God, and more of saints saved for the ends of God. But these signify a return to the true Reformed Faith, not a departure from it. The older Reformed Theology was a larger thing than the narrow and exclusive conventionalism which speaks as if it alone were orthodox, while the really open and progressive spirits of our younger men are often, unconsciously indeed, but truly and seriously seeking to regain the principles, aims, and system of the Reformers and Puritans. Indeed, I would say, not in paradox, but in sober earnest, that if heresy, whether from a biblical or historical point of view, exists anywhere, it may be more easily found in the school which is chiefly concerned in the attack. But, of course, change is not always a very clear and conscious process. It means life, as the absence of change does not do, but it may also mean for a time at least confusion and misunderstanding. I am far from minimising the danger of our present position, though I think it is not nearly so dangerous or so full of unevangelical

* These are answers to a letter calling attention to the "down-grade," and asking my correspondent to give the results of his own observation—1. As to existence of a wide-spread departure from the Evangelical faith among Congregational ministers. 2. As to any special hindrances to the spiritual progress of the Churches.—EDITOR.

elements as the position of those who boast, most falsely, that they have remained unchanged.

Were I to say what I think the great need of the time, it would be, increased attention to theological education. The knowledge of theology is the thing most wanted and certain to be most corrective of our errors. Our colleges have hitherto in looking after literary training been forced to neglect to a very great extent theological—and men sent out to preach without being qualified by a special discipline are men handed over, not to a knowledge of the Scriptures, but either to the reactionary or revolutionary tendencies in the churches of to-day. Greater respect for theological truth will come out of greater knowledge, and clear thinking will lead to clear teaching and biblical preaching.

Into the causes hindering spiritual prosperity, I hardly feel able to enter. They are many; to blame the pulpit seems to me a shallow and foolish thing. It has its own part of the blame to bear—no more and no less. The pulpit represents effects quite as much as causes. Fashion is stronger than ever; Society has developed new forces and new attractions; the growth of political power has been attended by the increase and exercise of political energies, and political enthusiasm is more absorbing than it once was; and while I would not say that the emphasis on political action has weakened religious conviction, yet I am sure the former has absorbed much of the practical and mental energy once given to the latter. Then the love of money has much to answer for; so have the many social and economical changes, affecting both masters and workmen, due to the introduction of steam and the large factory system. The old simple home life, which allowed and even encouraged the cultivation of piety, has been much broken into, often indeed altogether broken down; the rigorous and inexorable machinery which men have to tend, whether as hands or heads of great concerns, has stolen the old domestic quiet which enriched the home and the life with opportunities, much prized and rarely neglected, for meditation, devotion, worship, and the spiritual converse which was at once the inspiration and the instruction of the soul. The older religious ambitions have decayed: men have not consecrated their sons to God; how many men enter our colleges with the fragrance of ancient and early consecration upon them? And how can the colleges supply better men than they receive, or how can the pulpit be more inspired than the homes that nurse the men who fill it? No doubt, forces are at work in the intellectual world unfriendly to faith, and these affect all men, even if only in the way of tempting men who do not understand to speak words of injurious unwisdom. But these are to be overcome now as they have been overcome in the past by the continued faith and reason and devotion of the churches. In the face of our present intellectual difficulties to hand over the preaching of the gospel to ignorance would be to sentence our churches and faith to early and certain extinction.

In conclusion, I can only say that I end without having well begun, or having said what I would most like to say. But I am hurried, and the subject is too grave to be hastily discussed. Here, if anywhere, the judgments of an exhilarated and random dogmatism are out of place. He is neither a capable nor a trustworthy physician who traces to a single and simple cause changes which are due to many and general and complex causes. And if changes bring loss, they also bring gain; if religion has lost some of her old inner and spiritual graces, she has gained a wider field, larger and higher activities. Our churches, in a degree never dreamed of a generation or two ago, are labouring to translate the gospel into spiritual character and being, indeed into all the forms of personal, social, civil, and ecclesiastical life. And I for one am grateful for the change, though I hope fully alive to its dangers; and resolved to do my own little part to avert them, especially by helping to create a disciplined and devoted ministry, a richer, fresher, more Biblical, and therefore more Christian, theology.

REV. PROFESSOR CHAPMAN.

I AM not at all surprised at your wishing to take some notice of Mr. Spurgeon's recent article. The gravity of the charge is great, and coming from one whom we all esteem for his works' sake, it becomes the more serious.

You ask me to give my judgment as to whether, so far as my experience goes, there are evidences of a departure from the Evangelical faith on the part of our ministers, and what may be the causes hindering spiritual prosperity in our churches.

I feel it to be a very difficult and delicate matter to handle this subject with the thoroughness it demands. There are so many points of divergence in the form and style of pulpit effort, as compared with former days, that it is not always easy to distinguish what is due to a larger conception of the Spirit of Christ, from what is the faulty product of a transitory period. Nothing is easier than to use general terms, and to repeat mere hearsay. In every age there have been men who have found fault with the utterances of the pulpit, on the ground that they have not coincided with the Shibboleth which, by reason of a defective training, they have been led to pronounce. From my youth, up to the present, I have heard it said of good men that they did not preach "the gospel," while in reality they were preaching perhaps a better gospel than that recognized by their detractors. I think it is a most venturesome thing for a man to affirm what others preach, when he himself has not frequent opportunity of hearing them. There is a vast amount of induction from the most slender data. I remember once that a Unitarian writer even had the hardihood to question whether Matthew Henry was throughout life a Trinitarian, because, forsooth, among his MSS. there was found only

one sermon formally treating of the Trinity! I am anxious not to be among those who simply repeat what they hear from others, or who form a judgment on a fragmentary statement. I must admit that I have been told by persons, whose judgment is ordinarily good, that in and near London there is much that is nebulous in the theological teaching of many ministers; but so far as my own personal knowledge extends, and it is rather wide, I believe that our ministers, as a whole, are perfectly true to the Evangelical lines traversed by our ecclesiastical forefathers. Within the past five years, it is true, I have known of a few, very few, men who have gone off those lines. They have gradually departed from the faith till they passed over to their proper place among the Unitarians. But in these instances, the fact of their defection only brought out into bold relief the integrity of our ministry, and the superiority for religious ends of our Evangelical faith; for no sooner had it become known whither they were tending than the whole of the ministry of the counties in which they lived were pained by their attitude, and the churches over which they presided became mere wrecks of their former selves—spiritual life began to die out. Now, it seems to me that these are exceptions which prove the rule. Moreover, I have never known a time when some men did not go astray. The human tendency which appeared even in Apostolic days has manifested itself in every age of the Church. But it is manifestly unfair to magnify occasional local changes, so as to compromise a denomination. I am well acquainted with the ministry of these neighbouring counties, and I do not believe that there is one among our brethren who does not hold to and proclaim the Evangelical truths which have in the past been so much blessed to the salvation of men.

There are, unquestionably, scattered through the country a few brethren whose ideas of the nature of sin and atonement are not such as we generally entertain, and who dwell exclusively on what may be termed the more tender attributes of the Divine Being. But as a few spots on the sun necessarily become conspicuous, by reason of contrast with the mass of the luminous body, so the peculiarity of these brethren arrests attention, and becomes a matter of much and frequent observation. My impression is that such incidental departures would be little thought of, and would, in due time, find their natural issue, were it not that it has been for a long time the policy of *The Christian World* to bring them to the front, to parade them and cluster them, and represent them as the indications of a mighty movement in "advanced thought." It has been assumed by some, that because that journal has an enormous circulation, therefore these representations are greatly favoured by our ministry and the churches. But this is not the case. I know, as a fact, that hundreds of my own acquaintance repudiate these representations and deplore their existence, who yet, for various reasons, like to read what is elsewhere to be found in the paper.

As to the theology of our pulpit, I believe it is substantially what it always has been, although there may be less distinctive doctrinal teaching, and a changed mode of representation. With few exceptions, there is a strong assertion of the Divine authority of the Bible on all matters spiritual. Verbal inspiration is a thing of the past. I know that many earnest men have been, and are perplexed by the reputed discoveries of science, as to the antiquity of man, on the strictly historic character of the first and second chapters of Genesis, and they are feeling their way to a view of inspiration which, while admitting ascertained facts, preserves the full authority of Scripture on matters strictly spiritual. I can quite understand how men, trained to earlier views on this question, and unable by pressure of pastoral work to enter into the abundant modern literature bearing on it, should be embarrassed; but if a young pastor, fresh from college, is at sea on this question, I can only say that his college training must have been either very antiquated or else was inadequate to the present stage of the controversy. In fact, it is a want of thorough theological training, a defective acquaintance with the subject, that explains most of the restlessness and defection of which some complain.

On the cardinal question of the Trinity, we are where our fathers were. I have noticed in the journal to which I have referred occasional attempts to show that some of our brethren lean towards a Modal Trinity; but if there be such they must be very few indeed. Sabellianism was long since exposed as a most superficial view of a profound subject. I am disposed to think that those who write contemptuously of the old faith, and claim that everything shall be seen to be understandable, in the sense that a mathematical problem is, will soon demand a review of the whole question of the Trinity, and so by logical necessity pass over to the position of Paul of Samosata and of his modern representatives—the Unitarians. The fundamental principle of their so-called "Modern Thought," namely scientific demonstration, and the spirit in which it is advocated must, when fairly worked out, lead in that direction. *Facilis descensus.* Has Faith any sphere?

Perhaps the most prominent point of the Evangelical faith next to that of the Trinity is that of the Atonement, with its consequent doctrine of Justification by Faith in the Lutheran sense. Subject to the occasional exceptions to which I have referred, there can be no doubt that this article of the faith is firmly held. Those who accept and teach merely the "Moral View" are few and far between, and they can only do it by first doing violence especially to the language of St. Paul, or else by discounting the authority of the apostles, a position evidently forced upon them in order to get rid of the "objective" element in the Atonement. At the same time, I do not think our modern ministry asserts this doctrine with the frequency and emphasis of former times. On this and kindred topics there is too much of an apologetic tone. For this there are reasons not far to seek. Thus, it is a fact that many of

our brethren have allowed the notion to possess and govern them that they are the teachers of the Church only, the means by which the Church shall develop its powers for the good of mankind, and hence their ministry assumes that Christians *are* regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and *are* justified by faith in Christ. There is not, therefore, supposed to be the need of frequently and emphatically insisting on the necessity of the sacrificial work of Christ as a ground of acceptance with God. All such elementary truths they leave to evangelists and missionaries, whose function it is to call men to repentance and to faith in Christ. Moreover, the attention of ministers has been somewhat diverted from these topics by regard for the practical side of the Christian life, by a deep sense of the bearing of righteousness of life on the ultimate triumphs of the gospel, and by the demand on every side for philanthropic effort.

As to Calvinism, there has been a modification here. I do not agree with Dr. Dale that it is practically dead. There are few indeed who insist on the old forms of expression, and many have openly repudiated both the form and the substance of Calvinism. Yet the *true* element that lay in the old Calvinism abides still in the deep sense of absolute dependence on Divine grace for renewal of nature. The occasional talk of the rejection of Calvinism being the result of the "advanced thought" of the nineteenth century is mere cant, since it is only the position which the Methodists have held from the early years of Wesley, and many in the Church of England from the time of the Reformation. I have no doubt our Methodist friends will be comforted in knowing that they have been so long in "advance" of their critics.

On the question of the future there is much uncertainty. I should say that comparatively few amongst us are prepared to dogmatise on the destiny of the Christless in the same terms and with the same emphasis as Mr. Spurgeon. By far the greater number, I think, hold the question in solution, believing in a most fearful retribution for all who deliberately reject Christ, while at the same time resting in the inviolable justice of God. The doctrine of conditional immortality finds but few supporters, and no wonder, considering its queer, mutable psychology, to say nothing of its theological value; while still fewer hold to Universalism. There is, I think, a tendency to what, in theological circles, is called Dornerism, in reference to the possibility of redemption being effected after death for those who in their life, being outside true Christian influence, never had the chance of coming face to face with Christ.

My impression is that we are coming to a time when we shall have to define more distinctly our pulpit teaching. That doctrinal themes have to some extent been kept in abeyance is only a consequence of a transitory state of things. It is probable that in some congregations the hearers may have been more under the influence of a certain modern literature than the preacher, and this may have induced in them a restlessness and doubt which in due time have affected

the matter and manner of the preaching. Some preachers seem to feel as though they were speaking to men who were in doubt as to Christian verities, and hence the apologetic character of the modern pulpit. There is a curious inconsistency in many of these doubters, which in time affects the preacher. They are shocked at what they call the anthropomorphism of those who held to the Evangelical faith, and yet because they themselves are pitiful and humane in their treatment of offenders, and in their private capacity have little or nothing to do with the execution of justice, they conceive of God as being just the same as they are, leaving out of view the essential justice of His nature as revealed in words, in the work of Christ, and, also, in the terrible woes which, in the ordained course of nature, come on wrong doing.

We all know that some who have held the Evangelical faith have at times represented it in language repulsive to cultivated minds and not warranted by a sound and fair interpretation of Scripture, and it is annoying to see how these crude representations are seized hold of and paraded as the proper statement of the faith for which we contend. The gross charge, for instance, that the doctrine of vicarious atonement, as it is actualized in the death of Christ, is essentially immoral, is an insult to the sense of propriety and justice of those who hold it. It is a mere worldly policy that sets forth crude representations for the form of truth held, and then speaks of moral consequences or implications. The ministry of the future must be most intelligently instructed in the essential truths we hold, and all must strive to separate the gold of the gospel from the dross of human conception.

With reference to the hindrances to spiritual prosperity in our churches, I think that, in addition to those which spring from the normal action of human nature in all ages, a few may be mentioned that are peculiar to our age.

1. There is now a diffusion of energy over a wider area than formerly, and a more intense discharge of energy in professions and business. It follows that there is so much less energy of nature for spiritual culture. Men cannot put the power into religious exercises that has gone out in other directions.

2. The energy that has flown in religious channels has gone largely into the form of organization and public exertion on behalf of others, so that less force is put into personal fellowship with God, which is the secret of spiritual prosperity.

3. The saturation of the mind of the Church with a scornful or sceptical literature during the week, induces a secularity of mind when in the sanctuary, and tends to quench the desire for close fellowship with God.

4. The habit of many of our pastors of confining their reading too much to controversial and apologetical subjects, thus causing them to live largely in an atmosphere of doubt, or, at all events, absorbing energy which might in part be spent in delving deep down into the foundations of positive biblical truth.

REV. SAMUEL PEARSON.

My feeling is that after some months of reflection Mr. Spurgeon will see that he has been hasty in his judgment, sweeping in his assertions, and incorrect in his conclusions. His motive is unquestionable and honourable. He is moved by zeal for the gospel. But if his statements be incorrect, they are not only likely to wound men labouring under great difficulties, but they will most assuredly cause the enemies of the Evangelical faith to rejoice. But what are the evidences brought forward as to this fearful departure from Christianity? The evidences are the newspapers which represent the Broad School of Dissent, "a certain meeting of ministers and church officers," "matter of notoriety" as to attendance at theatres, the fear of an eminent minister that history is about to repeat itself, the sayings of "a plain man" and of a "gracious woman," the letter of a deacon, the rebuke administered by another deacon to a college student—and what else? Nothing, absolutely nothing. We do not know the names of any of these people, and we are quite unable to test the value of what they say or to discover whether and how far they have a knowledge which would justify Mr. Spurgeon in drawing up such a tremendous indictment against his brethren.

The accusation is that the Atonement is scouted in many of our churches, and that the inspiration of Scripture, the personality of the Holy Ghost, the punishment of sin, the resurrection (whether of Christ or of the dead is not stated), are all denied. Is it not sufficient to answer that these things are not so, and to go on preaching Christ's gospel and holding Mr. Spurgeon in honour, notwithstanding the fit of trepidation which has overtaken him?

I do not know a single Congregational minister who denies any of the above doctrines. I have preached somewhat through the country, more particularly through the north of England, and I know personally a large number of ministers in the south. I have been in the Congregational ministry for nearly twenty-two years, and I do not remember to have met four ministers to whom these doctrines were doubtful. I have lived in most cordial relations with my Baptist brethren, and I can truly say that a more earnest band of men devoted to Christ and His gospel it would be impossible to find. As to the Methodists and the Presbyterians, I presume that their attachment to Scriptural Christianity is beyond question. It would be strange indeed if in such a large mass of ministers we should not find some who err from the faith. The infidelity of Judas would not have warranted Peter in charging the whole of the apostles with apostasy.

Those who are very conservative in the form of their theology often mistake a change in expression for a change in the substance of teaching. I rejoice to believe that the teaching of our pulpits is much

nearer the mind of Christ than it was thirty years ago. It is more Christian, not less. Theories of atonement and of inspiration which once held the field do so no longer. But Christ's death as the ground of pardon and the authority of Scripture in matters of faith are dearer than ever. I do not say that our preaching is all that can be desired. There are few preachers that are self-satisfied, if they are destined to do good. I think that we all need more warmth, more of what the old school called "unction." In our effort to escape the weakly sentimental we have become too essay-like in our utterances. But making all deductions for manner and methods, our theology remains essentially Christian and Evangelical. I do not say that our theology is after the "Tabernacle" pattern. But I am bold to say that there is a general effort to make it after the New Testament type. If we differ from Mr. Spurgeon as to our forms of thought, we honour him none the less for the splendid service which he has done and is doing in the Master's kingdom. It is not too much to ask that he will exercise his sturdy common-sense, and see that men may love and preach the great verities of the gospel, though they do not swear by a Calvinistic creed. The theology of our pulpit is strongly Evangelical, with far more of practical application to morals than in former times. To go into details would be to provoke a theological controversy which might be utterly barren of good result, and which could not fail to leave some bitterness behind.

The condition of our churches is a question on which it is very difficult to speak with certainty. My impression is that, tested by practical work for the neglected at home and abroad, our churches have improved upon their predecessors. There is not the same subjective piety, but there is a healthy, manly determination to grapple with the evils that are around us, and to find suitable remedies. The old hindrances—the world, the flesh, and the devil—take new forms, and real earnest church life is as hard to develop and keep alive as ever it was. The facilities of locomotion have changed the face of society, and have produced special difficulties in our spiritual efforts. Without a vast amount of Sunday travelling, neither Mr. Spurgeon's nor any other central place of worship could keep up its power. The distance at which members live must affect the way in which they co-operate with their fellow-communicants. And, on the other hand, suburban churches are tempted to cut themselves off from the poorer classes. Too much time is often spent over late dinners, concerts, and business; and the fellowship of the saints is forsaken. Where spiritual decline is visible it is often partly due to neglect in the pew and partly to neglect in the pulpit and pastorate. But I do not take a gloomy view of things. Testing spiritual realities by the tone of home life, the healthfulness of our literature and amusements, the actual work done for Christ at home and abroad, I think we have reason to thank God and take courage. There is enough left undone to make us very humble; but before we accept counsels of despair, let us

be careful to give God thanks for what He has done by our instrumentality. My hope is that we shall be able to cheer Mr. Spurgeon by good news, and that he will soon see that there are seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Sometimes a mouse may help a giant when the net of depression is thrown over him, and I pray God that Mr. Greatheart may speedily be himself again.

REV. W. F. ADENEY.

THE Editor of THE CONGREGATIONAL REVIEW has asked me to answer the following questions :—

1. Does your observation lead you to believe that there is any extensive departure from the evangelical faith among our younger ministers ?

2. What is your opinion as to the existence of any special hindrances to the spiritual prosperity of our churches ?

I quote these questions verbatim, because they exhibit the exact limits of my attempted reply. I can only speak of what has come under my own observation, and if my remarks should prove of any utility, this will not be through my presuming to sit as a judge, summing up a case for or against my brethren—a position which would be as foolish as it would be impertinent—but because I respond to an editorial *sub-pœná*, and venture to appear as a witness of so much of the present movements of religious thought and life as falls within the range of my own experience.

One further word by way of explanation. Lest I should seem guilty of plagiarism in stealing the thoughts of predecessors, or, what is worse, guilty of uncharitableness in unceremoniously traversing their remarks, let me say that I write at a distance from home, and without access to the last number of the REVIEW, which I understand contains answers to the above-named questions. At all events I can claim to be an independent witness, and this fact may make either unconscious coincidence with, or unconscious divergence from, the opinions of those who have gone before me the more significant.

1. In regard to the first of the two questions my impressions are very decided. I cannot but feel that a very great change indeed has come over the theological position of the Congregational ministry—a change that may be most boldly pronounced among the younger ministers, but one that is even more striking in its bearings on the older ministers, in whom it has had to contend with the settled habits and prejudices of an early contrary training. I cannot quite follow Dr. Clifford in that part of his powerful sermon at Leeds that refers to this subject. It seems to me that we have gone a great way farther than the abandonment of the “old clothes” which once covered the “old truths.” No philosophy of clothes will be deep enough to satisfy the whole case.

The present day theological thinker is not simply a "Sartor Resartus." Nor is the change merely skin-deep. The exuviation of an ancient integument will give a fresh hue to what is after all nothing but the old thought. To some even such a process is regarded as most painful, and indeed so it must be if it be involuntary, for what can be worse than to be flayed alive? But the change which has come over the great majority of Christian ministers with whom I have associated is deeper. It is the abandonment of what was once regarded as central and essential to the strength and vigour of the Christian religion; it is nothing less than the expulsion of the old bones of a formerly prevalent theology, the extraction of the very skeleton about which that theology was built up. Nevertheless, I am equally confident in the assurance that the change which has taken place has not involved any departure from the evangelical faith. What has been given up is not that faith, but mainly Calvinism. Surely it is not a mere private opinion, but an obvious and indubitable fact of contemporary history that our age has seen a wholesale abandonment of Calvinism on the part of Congregationalists. A former generation was Calvinistic to the backbone. Indeed, there were not wanting those who treated Calvinism as the essential creed of Congregationalists. This is so no longer. Some of the elder men among us may wince at the assertion that they have given up the Genevan theology in which they were born and bred. Let them, then, compare the sermons they preached at the commencement of their ministry with the sermons they are now preaching. I venture to assert that if they are not theological fossils, and their churches museums of antiquities, they have unconsciously shifted many of their positions. Why, even Mr. Spurgeon himself has not escaped the influence of the great change—as any one may see who will compare a volume of old Park Street sermons with a recent volume of "The Metropolitan Pulpit." But as it seems to me, not the younger men only, but the bulk of Congregational ministers, have moved far from that Calvinistic standpoint which Mr. Spurgeon still courageously holds.

It is not merely that certain extreme and hard views are abandoned in deference to the milder, humanitarian spirit of our day. The central pivot on which the whole system of belief swings has shifted. Calvinism turned on the Divine sovereignty. This was the centre of the whole scheme; everything else was viewed in relation to it. The alternation of such a position involved a shock to all the rest. But the sovereignty of God is not now the central fact of Christian faith. It is not denied that God is Lord of lords and King of kings, supreme in fact as well as in right, throughout the spiritual as well as throughout the physical universe. But this is no longer the central truth which determines all the rest. Now, as I think it can scarcely be disputed, the love of God stands at the centre of Christian thought. Calvin did not deny the existence of Divine love; nor do sensible believers in Christianity deny the Divine supremacy. But now love is thought of as inspiring

sovereignty—not sovereignty as to all human appearance limiting the exercise of love. The fatherhood of God is thought of as necessarily involving His kingship—for the father is a sovereign in his own house, but the kingship of God is no longer thought of as dominating, limiting, and exceeding His fatherhood. This change goes hand in hand with a view of freewill in man not very easily reconcilable with the Calvinistic version of Divine decrees.

The great theologian of the Reformation would have been horrified at the description of these doctrinal questions as affecting mere “clothes.” To him they lay at the centre, at the very foundation of his whole system.

But Calvinism is not identical with evangelical truth, or the Methodists would not have been evangelical, and the decay of Calvinism does not mean apostasy from that truth. No doubt great changes have taken place in other directions. Men are more cautious of dogmatic statements of truth. It cannot be denied that the questioning spirit of the age and the impatience of mere traditional authority which are everywhere set loose, have swept over the ranks of the Congregational ministry. But this is no reason for alarm, except on the part of those nervous people who are always fearing for the ark of the Lord, as if truth could not endure light, nor facts bear investigation. Surely it is their timidity that exhibits lack of faith. Undoubtedly many an untenable position of formal theology has been abandoned. But I am convinced that none of these changes involve disloyalty to the fundamental evangelical position. On the contrary, I feel assured that the great belief which may be summarized under four heads in the doctrines of grace, faith, Christ and the cross—*i.e.*, the belief in *redemption by the grace of God, through faith in the crucified and risen Christ*—is held in the Congregational ministry with unfaltering decisiveness, with no sign of tremor or wavering.

2. I have left but little space for my reply to the second inquiry; and here I cannot speak with so much definiteness or positiveness. I do not believe, however, that the sifting and shifting of theological thought that has been taking place in our midst is any hindrance to Christian prosperity. On the contrary, it increases the motive energies of our churches by directing closer attention to human interests. That there are hindrances, no one who is engaged in trying to further Christian life and work can help feeling most painfully. The difficult question is to ascertain how far they are peculiar to our own age, and to what extent they are inherent in the present condition of human nature and its surroundings. One or two palpably pressing hindrances I will note as they strike me most forcibly:—

1. *The tyranny of business.* The easy-going days of the past, when a man could have leisure for a dozen external interests and yet make his business fairly successful, have gone. Competition is so keen

people say, that unless they put their whole hearts and souls into their occupations they are certain to fail. This absorption is more than one of time and energy, it threatens to invade the spiritual region and make conscience subservient to expedients—all ballast that does not visibly help the voyage being thrown overboard that the ship may win the race.

2. *Suburban habits.* These seem to work mischief in two ways. The metropolitan centres where men make their money, but where they do not live, are neglected. The pleasant semi-rural spots on which they plant their villas are regarded only as resting-places where the tired man of business seeks repose, and where he finds it hard to exert himself to undertake any Christian work.

3. *The passion for amusements.* Lawn tennis is a healthy and innocent exercise, and Mudie's library an invaluable institution. But when all leisure time in the summer is spent on the tennis-courts, and when the only intellectual interest of a winter evening is a fashionable novel, is not the brain energy drawn off from higher claims?

4. *The over-development of energy.* Even in regions of religious life the restless spirit of the age makes itself felt in its onesidedness. This is a time of splendid Christian enterprise. No church is now satisfied merely to be "going on comfortably." So far, so good. But in this superabundance of activity we cannot find time to think. We do not want to return to the days of cloistered indolence; but surely it is bad to lose the depth and sweetness and inward repose of contemplation. Life tends to become shallow, hasty, mechanical.

5. *Class feeling.* I believe that in some churches this is keenly felt to be making a mockery of the doctrine of Christian brotherhood. It is superfluous to distress ourselves about fine intellectual questions of doctrinal orthodoxy when the far higher orthodoxy of brotherly love is often sadly violated.

In concluding, to prevent misunderstanding, let me say that I attempt no comparison between the condition of spiritual life in our own day and that of any past age. Many hindrances are common to all times; some peculiar difficulties of bygone days have happily ceased to exist. I have merely indicated some dangers which seem to me to be of grave moment in our own day, because—whether our forefathers were better off or worse off than we are in respect to hindrances to the spiritual life—it is plain that our duty is just to note and fight those present evils that threaten us.

October 13, 1887.

We propose to sum up the controversy next month in an article on—
 "Is Mr. Spurgeon's Case Proved?"—EDITOR.

CURRENT LITERATURE.

Dr. Salmon's Sermons. *Non-Miraculous Christianity, and other Sermons.* By GEORGE SALMON, D.D. (Macmillan and Co.) *Gnosticism and Agnosticism, and other Sermons.* By GEORGE SALMON, D.D. (Macmillan and Co.) Dr. Salmon is one of the men who "are not ashamed when they speak with their enemies in their gates." He is conspicuous as an expositor and champion of the truth, and the work which he does may fairly be placed by the side of that done by Dr. Lightfoot when he was at Cambridge, and which is still being done there by Dr. Westcott, and by our own Dr. Fairbairn (who is not a whit inferior to the best of them) at Oxford. All of them show us the value of systematic theology to the Church, and the necessity of making due provision for its culture. Dr. Salmon is Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Dublin, and we suppose that both volumes consist chiefly of sermons preached before the University. Otherwise, the first question to suggest itself would be as to where the congregations could be gathered that could follow and admire their close and vigorous reasoning. In the University Chapel at old Trinity there would be some hearers of the kind, and it is no slight advantage to any man that he should sometimes have an audience stimulating him to the employment of his loftiest powers. We fear that any congregation, even though among Dissenters, who had been long accustomed to preaching of the highest order, would feel that Dr. Salmon was soaring above them. No doubt in the University congregation the majority might have the same feeling, but, if we are to judge from our own reminiscences, the appreciative hearers would be many. In our own college days, Dr. O'Brien, afterwards a bishop in the Irish Church, and Archer Butler, whose remarkable power has hardly been recognized on this side the channel, were the favourite preachers. Dr. Salmon is their worthy successor in the pulpit, and it is to be hoped, and indeed presumed, that he has met with equally worthy successors in the pews.

Many of the sermons in both volumes are apologetic, and it is proper and wise that University discourses should often take this character, because students for the ministry need to be specially fortified for resisting the attacks upon the faith, to which, in common with all young men, they are exposed. Dr. Salmon's mode of treating these topics is singularly able and felicitous. He speaks with the authority of a master who has carefully studied the questions with which he deals, and is like an Alpine guide who has so often trodden the path himself, and is so familiar with all its difficulties and perils, that he has acquired competence to direct others. We have no platitudes or ambiguities here, no attempt to conceal the poverty of thought by a redundancy of expression, no appeal to prejudice. The preacher addresses himself to the reason, the conscience, and the heart, and draws his arguments largely from that science which is assumed

to be hostile to Christianity. There is nothing superficial in his contention, and it cannot be dismissed in a flippant style. Dr. Salmon can meet scientists on their own ground, as is fully shown by his sermons in the earlier series on "Theism and Modern Science," "Atheistic Theories of Religion," proved by a scientific test, and on "Evolution," and by that on "Gnosticism and Agnosticism," which gives the title to the more recent volume. In all of them the style is lucid and forcible, without any superfluous ornament, but yet with quite sufficient illustration. Happily, as we think, these are not sermons which can be borrowed and preached by those who "toil not, neither do they spin!" They are not for popular audiences, but for ministers and students, and, if they will put them to proper use, they may be of immense service both to them and their congregations. We should have been glad to give illustrations from all of them, but we must limit ourselves in this respect to a single extract from the very striking argument in which the preacher shows that Gnosticism and Agnosticism have a close affinity:

"It follows then, as I have said, that Agnosticism is the most arrogant form of Gnosticism. The subject of religion is one which so vitally concerns man's highest interests, that ignorance of it, from indifference or from mental ignorance, would argue total incapacity to enter into some of the most elevating and ennobling thoughts that have filled the human mind. Agnosticism, then, would be too contemptible to deserve argument if it did not profess to rest on a philosophic conviction, founded on a survey of the human powers, that knowledge on such subjects is unattainable. Others may profess that they know God, but the Agnostic knows there is none—that is to say, for practical purposes none, since a God is, for all practical purposes, a nonentity if it can do us no good to concern our thoughts about Him, or to seek His favour, and if we are in every respect to act just as we should act if we were assured He did not exist. Thus you see that while the Agnostic in words makes a modest confession of ignorance, in reality he lays claim to the possession of certain knowledge on a subject to which mankind have for generations applied their best thoughts, and yet, if this modern school is to be believed, gone hopelessly astray. Is it the case that all who now call themselves Agnostics are entitled to claim the superiority to other men which their theory implies? I think not. I believe the true type of these Agnostics to be the sailors of Columbus, who begged and implored him to turn his ship round, confident as they were that he was on a path on which nothing could be found. But this confidence arose from no philosophic knowledge that investigation must be fruitless. It was nothing but indolent impatience of the toil of search, inability to recognize the tokens of success which had already presented themselves, incapacity to share the scientific faith in things unseen, which assured their master that if they would but persevere in the way by which he led them they should certainly reach the land of promise which lay

beyond. We have had reason to see that there was arrogant presumption in the Gnosticism of those Christian speculators who ventured to say, 'We know,' little less presumption in the assertion, 'We know not and cannot know.' What then is the truth? Is it not as the apostle has said, 'We know in part.' We know as children know the occupations and anxieties of mature life."

The argument reminds us of a very eloquent passage in John Foster's introduction to Doddridge's Essay on Religion, in which he deals with the Atheist in the same way, contending that he cannot positively assert there is no God, without claiming for himself the very attributes which belong to God. But it is not only in the sustained force and eloquence of passages of this kind that the power of Dr. Salmon appears. The acuteness of his reasoning is not more striking than the frequent terseness and vigour of his expressions. Often we have a solitary sentence which, like a bright flash of thought, lights up an entire subject, and fixes itself on the memory and the heart. But we should do Dr. Salmon great injustice if we left it to be supposed that his sermons were wholly controversial. His practical discourses are equally original and interesting.

Expository Discourses. By SAMUEL COX, D.D. Third Series. (T. Fisher Unwin.) If, as we suppose, the issue of this new volume indicates that Dr. Cox's venture is a success, his readers are to be congratulated as well as himself. This annual contribution to the most important section of their library ought to be, and we feel sure will be, welcomed by ministers, and by a large body of readers beside. Despite the foolish talk of some about the decay of faith in Christianity, there were never so many people eager to know everything about the Bible, and to understand what it has to teach. One reason of this undoubtedly is the new principle of interpretation, which no one has worked out more fully and thoroughly than Dr. Cox. His life is given up to the study of the Holy Scriptures, and he neglects no line of inquiry which, by giving him a better understanding of the writers and their surroundings, may enable him to enter more thoroughly into the spirit of the books, and bring out their meaning with more completeness. There could be no more delightful occupation for himself, and by the work he does he lays a large number of readers under very heavy obligations. The present volume shows no signs of exhaustion, either in the subject or the writer. Dr. Cox is a wise householder, and he is able to bring out of the rich treasure which he has found in the Scriptures things both new and old. His success is largely due to the comprehensive view he takes of the Bible. He is not content to work his way through books or parts of books, still less to confine himself to isolated texts, but he looks at them in their relation to each other, and seeks to develop any general idea which is common to them. The groups of discourses which are found in his different volumes are among their most striking features. Thus, in the present issue, we

have three discourses which bring out in original and attractive style the characteristics of three of the Psalmists—Heman, Ethan, and Asaph—who have hitherto been to us little more than names; but who, under Dr. Cox's treatment, acquire an individuality, and have their own distinctive features as singers of Israel. Then we have a most suggestive and valuable series on the "Faithful Sayings of the Primitive Church," which he regards as the words of the prophets of the New Testament dispensation—a class of men who, as a body, have received too little attention. "Several of our ablest critics and commentators maintain that in these faithful sayings we have words uttered by the Christian prophets, words which, when tested by those who were bound to 'try the spirits,' were accepted and approved; words which were found to be so apt and simple and terse that they spread from church to church, and were tossed from lip to lip, as proverbs are at this day, until they became 'household words,' at least in 'the household of faith;'" words which even an inspired apostle could quote as of a high and acknowledged authority, as even more likely than his own words to command an universal assent. And if we remember that these sayings are found only in the Pastoral Epistles, and that these epistles were not written till more than thirty years after the Day of Pentecost, more than thirty years, *i.e.*, after the Christian prophets had commenced their work, we shall at least admit that there had been ample time for some of their sayings to have crept into common use, to have won general acceptance, as true, trustworthy, and most happy expressions of the fundamental truths of the gospel" (p. 232).

Not less interesting than this group on the Faithful Sayings are four sermons on the Charter of Individualism, themselves supplementary to a previous one on the Transfer of the Religious Unit, which are a very ably reasoned endeavour to reconcile the teachings of Moses and Ezekiel on this point, and to show how far the influence of heredity may be counteracted by that of environment. In the last Gospel of Science Dr. Cox deals in an extremely acute and able manner with the controversy between Mr. Gladstone and the scientists, which was carried on in *The Nineteenth Century*, a few months ago. This volume fully sustains the reputation of its predecessors.

Henry Ward Beecher. A Eulogy. By JOSEPH PARKER, D.D. (James Clarke & Co.) It was not an easy work which Dr. Parker undertook when he consented to deliver an oration in praise of Henry Ward Beecher. The eulogy is, we suppose, an American institution, and certainly it is one which we do not wish to import. The funeral sermon has something of the same character, but it is preached in the hour when the grief is bitter, and the sense of loss keenest, when it is natural that the strong feelings of the heart should find expression, when, in short, there is less of the restraint we ordinarily observe even in speaking of our friends. The eulogy which is pronounced months after-

wards is a very different thing, and the task of pronouncing it cannot be an enviable one. Of course it is only in very rare cases that this honour is paid to the dead, and while Henry Ward Beecher, one of the most remarkable of Americans, is just the man who would be singled out for it, Dr. Parker was the man to offer this tribute of affection. Nevertheless, the duty was not easy to discharge. The outpouring of affectionate admiration which was demanded by the Doctor's own feelings toward his friend, must necessarily seem extravagant to the outside world. That it is true to Dr. Parker's own heart will be questioned by no one who knew the relations between the two men, and if the eulogy may seem extreme, especially when it is read in the calm and quiet of the study instead of being heard amid the excitement of a crowded and sympathetic assembly, it must not be forgotten that there is much excuse for any excess. Mr. Beecher has been severely criticised, not to say fiercely attacked, and as is always the case, his friends and sympathizers clung to him all the more closely on that account. Dr. Parker has been foremost among these, and he has here put forth all his great power to do honour to his friend. We do not expect discrimination in such an estimate of a man's character and work. In this eulogy Mr. Beecher is a hero, and is glorified accordingly. In many respects he deserves all the praise. He was a great orator, he was greater as a brave and unflinching champion of freedom. As to his theology and its influence the last word has not yet been spoken. Dr. Parker's is an eloquent tribute to his memory.

Pictures from Holland. Drawn with Pen and Pencil. By RICHARD LOVETT, M.A. (R. T. S.) Holland ought to have a peculiar interest for Englishmen, and especially for English Nonconformists, but we doubt whether it has ever attracted them as it ought. Its wide flat plains are not inviting, and the canals which intersect its fairest cities detract from their beauty. Having read most glowing descriptions of "the Hague" as one of the most charming of European capitals, we must confess that the reality fell far below the picture which imagination had painted. It must be said that we saw it under unfavourable circumstances. The wind was from the east, and there was nothing to relieve the dull oppressiveness of the leaden cloud which was over the sky. Still it was difficult to understand that even sunshine could turn a city traversed by the canals into a place of great beauty. Mr. Lovett would not acquiesce in this verdict. He seeks to prove that, "apart from the human interest which every land inhabited by man possesses in greater or less degree, Holland has claims upon the attention and interest of such weight that she is as well entitled to be studied as Germany and Egypt, Australia and Norway." Of course, if it were a question of historic interest, there could be no question. The land which is so intimately associated with our own, from having given us the monarch who, whatever may have been his faults, delivered us from one of the meanest and basest of tyrannies, and secured

for England a permanent and foremost place among the nations who are on the side of freedom and progress, ought to have an attraction for us, if on that account alone. But Holland has stronger claims than this. It is not only that she led the van on the pathway of commerce and was able to dispute our naval supremacy, and in the most disgraceful period of our history to defy us in our own waters. It is rather as the home of freedom and the refuge of the victims of persecution that Holland, where John Robinson trained so many of the Pilgrim fathers, is specially interesting to us. It is hard to realize the position which she once occupied in Europe, or to understand how these brave Dutchmen were able to assert and maintain their independence in opposition to the concentrated force of the mightiest empire of the time. Spain in the seventeenth century was a more potent force than Germany or Russia of to-day, and yet these Dutch provinces defied its power, and, though they were deserted by their Flemish associates, secured their own independence. Few stories are so romantic and so thrilling, and the wonder is that its heroes were of the most prosaic people of the most prosaic country in Europe. It is a common idea that heroes are nurtured in mountainous regions; but these heroes were trained amidst these flats. It is not an exaggeration to say that there is no feature of interest in connection with the story of the country which has escaped the attention of Mr. Lovett. He takes us to Delft, the city of the great man to whom Holland owes so much—William the Silent, one of the true heroes of Protestantism; to Amsterdam, where Alva had his headquarters during the siege of Haarlem, but from which he had to fly amid the unconcealed hatred and scorn of the people, and in whose church lie the remains of De Ruyter, one of the most formidable foes England has ever had to encounter on the element she regards as peculiarly her own; to the Hague, with its interesting palaces and rich art treasures; and to Leyden, whose university has a special theological celebrity from its connection with Arminius, but is for us always associated with the memory of John Robinson. The reader who accompanies our author in his very careful survey, will have got a more exact idea of Holland than he could have gained from any book with which we are acquainted. We seem, as the result, to know both the places and the people. Mr. Lovett has a keen eye for the central points to which it is necessary to give prominence, a wise discrimination in the selection of his topics, a felicitous mode of handling them, and withal a pleasant style. The illustrations are profuse and singularly appropriate to the purpose they are meant to serve. The following observations on a point of some importance in our ecclesiastical controversy are extremely wise. Their interest, indeed, is speculative rather than practical, as no proposition for concurrent endowment is at all likely to find favour in these times among ourselves.

"The State at present subsidizes all forms of religion in Holland. This is a comparatively recent practice, dating only from the earlier

part of this century. Previously there had been complete religious toleration, and indeed it would have been strange if in Holland, of all countries, this were not the case. But there have always been a large number of Roman Catholics in the country, more especially in the south-western provinces. At the present time there are nearly 1,500,000 Roman Catholics in Holland; and they had always hankered after State support, and in order to be able to help them the Government took the only practicable course, and subsidized all the religious bodies in the country. In 1877 the amount of the grant was £65,654. In these days of ecclesiastical controversy this, in the opinion of some, is an ideal state of affairs, and represents what all States should aim at. In former times each municipality managed the affairs of the Dutch Reformed Church. Now Government money helps them all. But in practice this has tended to reduce ministers of all denominations to the grade of State officials. It has checked the flow of voluntary contributions. It has rendered religion far too largely a matter of Government. And hence, in Holland, few, comparatively speaking, have shown their interest in Church life by contributing personal labour in its work, or funds to its support. The great current of Dutch voluntary gifts flows in the direction of benevolent work. Not that this in itself is anything but commendable. None would for a moment deprecate the attention and money bestowed upon benevolent work in Holland. But the practical result has been that the Church has to some extent lost its hold upon the sympathy of the people. It does not lie close to their daily life. It does not form, so to speak, a necessary part of their existence. Socialism has become a factor of some importance; and Roman Catholicism is taking a new lease of life. Nevertheless, with all these drawbacks, those actively engaged in Christian work in Holland are by no means despairing of the future" (pp. 54-55).

The book is a worthy addition to the admirable series of Christmas volumes which the Tract Society has published.

Elijah: his Life and Times. By REV. W. MILLIGAN, D.D. (J. Nisbet & Co.) This is an exceedingly interesting and well written monograph. Elijah is one of the grandest and most impressive figures in the Old Testament story, and Dr. Milligan does full justice to the heroic element in his character. At the same time he points out the weakness which was associated with it, and which shows how truly he was a man of like passions with ourselves. The lessons of wisdom and instruction to be learnt from his life are brought out with much clearness and fulness of illustration, while the various questions which the history suggests, such, *e.g.*, as the efficacy of prayer, and the true meaning of the vision on Mount Horeb, are discussed in a very thorough and satisfactory manner. Dr. Milligan takes a wide and comprehensive view of the subject, and handles it with great ability and force.

